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ABSTRACT

This document consists of the six volume 4 issues of the journal "Understanding Our Gifted." The six issues focus on student research, technology and education, empowering parents, assessing the gifted, collaborative efforts, and family relationships, respectively. Feature articles have the following titles and authors: "Inside Middle School: What Teenagers Think" (Dana Fox and Shana Katzel); "Up by Our Own Bootstraps" (Jeremiah Young and Demetrius Johnson); "Emerging Technologies and the Gifted" (Jan K. France); "Challenging the Gifted with Computer Software" (Gregory C. Pattridge); "Only a Parent: Three True Stories" (Stephanie S. Tolan); "Giftedness: The View from Within" (Martha J. Morelock); "Don't Throw Away the Old Binet" (Linda Silverman and Katheryn Kearney); "Discovering Highly Gifted Students" (Jan B. Hansen); "Comparing Different Measures of Intelligence" (Jerry Schecter); "School-Business Partnerships" (Elinor Katz); "Creative Collaboration: A Process for Enhancing Consultation" (Bev Woolhiser and Deborah A. Weiner); "SBASE (Spokane Business Assisting Scholastic Excellence)" (Judith L. Taylor); "Life in the Asynchronous Family" (Katheryn Kearney); "Geometric Relationships in the Gifted Family" (Linda Powers Leviton); and "Early College--A Parent's View" (Marcia Greason). In addition to the feature articles, most issues contain regular columns such as "Hidden Gifted Learner," "Parenting the Gifted," "Instructional Strategies," "The Reading Room," "Kaleidoscope," "The Highly Gifted," "Creative Ventures and Encounters," "Current Developments in Gifted Education," and "From Parent to Parent." (JDD)

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Inside Middle School: What Teenagers Think

Dana Fox and Shana Katzel

Introduction

This report describes a science project in which we designed a survey to learn more about students in our middle school in grades 6, 7, and 8. We asked questions pertaining to sense of well-being, self esteem, self respect, self perception, environmental issues, religious attitudes, family and friends, and special problems such as suicidal thoughts, substance abuse, and eating disorders. Further, we were interested in learning whether grade, gender, or level of academic ability in science related to these issues for middle school students. What happens to us during our childhood that instills beliefs and ideas that stay with us and cause us to take the path of development which we do? As Carol Gilligan (1988) has put it, "Since adolescence denotes the transition from childhood to adulthood, what constitutes 'development' in adolescence hinges on how one views the childhood that precedes it and the adulthood which follows" (p. viii).

During the middle school years students experience rapid changes and growth. (Continued on page 7)

UNDERSTANDING OUR GIFTED

Dedicated to helping gifted children reach their full potential

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September-October, 1991

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Up By Our Own Bootstraps

Jeremiah Young and
Demetrius Johnson

Note: This is a composite article, written by students ranging from grade 5 to college junior. We have been labeled learning disabled, gifted, and special ed. The pronoun "we" is used to refer to any of us. Actual quotes from peer group members are anonymous and liberally laced throughout the paper. These peer member quotes are in bold print.

Our peer assisted group began when a few of us realized we had knowledge and skills which might be of benefit to other students. We also realized that we needed help. We didn't know any other kids just like us, but we figured there must be some others out there someplace.

These youth are among the estimated 7 million young people—one in four adolescents—who are extremely vulnerable to multiple high-risk behaviors and school failure. Another 7 million may be at moderate risk, but remain a cause for serious concern. (Carnegie, 1989, p. 8)

Although we did alright in the early grades, school had never come easy to most of us. We were generally considered smart, but we never really (Continued on page 13)

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FROM THE EDITOR

Welcome to the fourth year of *Understanding Our Gifted*. In previous years, I have referred to our publication as a "newsletter"; yet, so many of our readers have told us it is much more than a newsletter that we've decided to start calling it a "mini-journal." It actually is a journal, since we invite top scholars in the field to contribute and use the same referencing system as any other professional journal. Our articles are just shorter and accessible to a wider range of readers than just professionals. We have a journal for parents, teachers, teacher-educators, counselors—even students.

Students not only read *Understanding Our Gifted*, they also contribute to it! In this issue, I am absolutely delighted to introduce four individuals whose scholarship is outstanding. Dana Fox and Shana Katzel initiated their research project on teenage social growth and development while they were both enrolled in middle school. "Inside Middle School" enlightens us about the values and attitudes of teens towards drugs, alcohol, suicide, and other factors related to self-esteem. The paper is a testament to the quality of work that can be produced by students in well designed gifted programs. How many other gifted students could do comparable research in junior or senior high school if provided with opportunities to learn research skills? I believe this article eloquently answers the question of why we need gifted programs.

Our other authors, Jeremiah Young and Demetrius Johnson, describe a self-help project they initiated for underachieving students like themselves. The students meet regularly to provide support and assistance to young people having trouble in school. They're planning a learning fair in September to spread the word to a larger group. The project is still in its initial phase but it already has had a profound impact on the self-esteem of the participants. This article shows us how adolescents are often an untapped resource of solutions to problems that face them.

We hope that these articles will inspire similar projects and replications in other communities. We would welcome submissions of student work of such high quality in future issues of *Understanding Our Gifted*. Our young authors would greatly appreciate your feedback. If their articles have helped, moved or inspired you in any way, please write to them directly or through our office. Thanks!

Linda Silverman

Understanding Our Gifted

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Publisher

Dorothy Knopper

Editor

Dr. Linda Kreger Silverman

Cartoonist

Linda Leviton

Column Editors

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Dorothy Knopper, *Private Consultant for the Gifted, Boulder, Colorado.*

DJ. Deirdre Lovecky, *Clinical Psychologist, Providence, RI*

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THE HIDDEN GIFTED LEARNER

Nonverbal Learning Disabilities

Abelard is a nine year old gifted child with a nonverbal learning disability. He is a poet and creative writer, excels at math, and invents outrageous puns. He is quiet, insightful and often daydreams. He also loses most of his possessions, exasperates teachers and parents alike with his messiness and disorganization, even forgets where he is going at times. Once he left school following another child and went on a field trip with another class while his classroom teacher frantically searched for him, and finally called the police.

Children with nonverbal learning disabilities tend to have difficulty with acquiring, storing, integrating and expressing visual and spatial information. This is shown in a number of academic, social and emotional areas and is related to a weakness in right brain skills. These gifted children have learning styles that are strongly verbal. They tend to be excellent at listening and remembering what they have heard, and are exceptionally good at verbal reasoning skills. Some are quite gifted at languages, literature, and creative writing. Others love music and remember whole songs, played by ear. These gifted students have a wonderful sense of humor and much of their creativity is language based, drawing on puns, witticisms, aphorisms, and anecdotes. They also are children who do better socially with adults or one-on-one with an easy going best friend.

The problems for gifted children with nonverbal learning difficulties can be somewhat subtle, especially

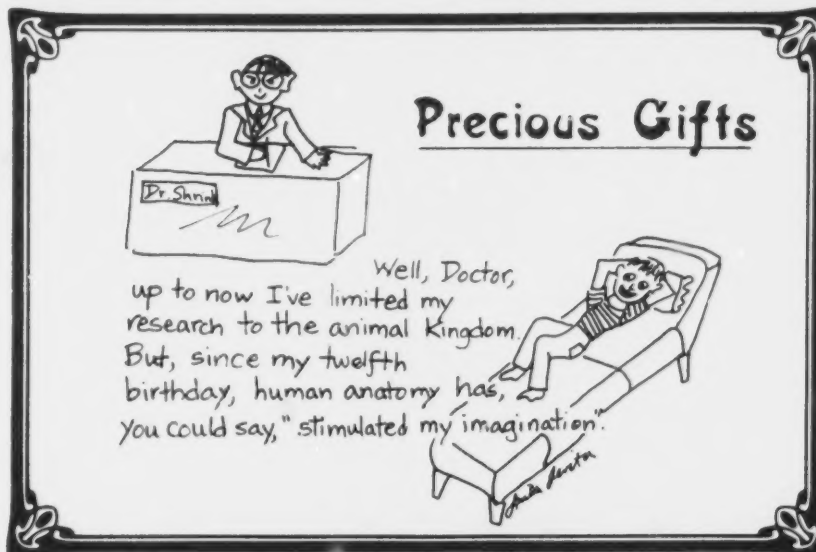
since most of them do quite well academically, and poor performance tends to be relative. Academic problems tend to show more in organization, planning, memorization of rote material, and in written work. In nonacademic areas, there are difficulties in social skills, social awareness, and emotional reactivity.

The primary problems of gifted children with nonverbal learning disabilities are in visual-spatial skills, including noting visual detail, directionality, ability to rotate material in space, sequence visual material, remember a set of objects, numbers, and letters, find things in space, organize visual material into a coherent pattern, plan a means of solving a visual problem (such as a maze); and poor visual-motor integration including poor handwriting, lack of speed in scanning material and poor performance on timed tests.

Children with nonverbal learning disabilities have difficulty with written work. They often produce brilliant creative work but may have trouble organizing it, elaborating on an initial idea adequately or prioritizing among many good ideas. Frequently, they have researched a great deal of information on a topic, but lack an internal schema or structure for a coherent analysis and presentation. Also, they tend to add irrelevant or tangential details that detract from the whole because they cannot visualize the whole.

Students with nonverbal learning disabilities also lack the ability to monitor themselves. Since it is nonverbal cues that people automatically register and use to help regulate and pace their lives, these students have difficulty understanding time and place, both in a literal and figurative sense. It is this difficulty especially that causes many problems in social awareness and timing, and constitute what has been recognized as a *social learning disability*. We will explore these issues in the next column.

Deirdre V. Lovecky, Ph.D., is a licensed clinical psychologist in private practice in Providence, RI, and a frequent author of articles on giftedness in children and adults.



PARENTING

Beginning this issue, Dr. Annemarie Roeper has become our new Parenting columnist. Please send your questions to her at 40 Binnacle Hill, Oakland, CA 94618.

It is with real pleasure that I have accepted the task of writing the parenting column for *Understanding Our Gifted*.

I will enjoy sharing with a larger audience what I have learned over the years working with gifted children and their parents. Please feel free to write to me about your child and I will try to answer your letters or integrate your questions into the column if they seem to be of general interest. I am planning to have flexible continuity in the content of the column. I will begin with a description of parenting the new born gifted child.

Why is my baby different from those of my friends?

From the day she was born Lisa seemed different from other children. She looked around with obvious curiosity. Her eyes never had the blank expression often typical for newborn babies. There always was awareness and reaction. Her expression changed with every sound she heard, every touch she felt. She cried easily, smiled early, was often awake during daytime hours and awoke frequently during the night.

Lisa's parents seemed to be drawn into some type of contact with her

continually. She soon began to make little cooing noises and even seemed to laugh at times. She interacted with the outside world. Soon her parents seemed to be permanently tired as well as stimulated by their lively daughter. It sometimes seemed as though they had no life of their own anymore.

Lisa's little cousin, Joan, was so different. She also enjoyed adults' attention and cried at times, but she slept most of the day, stared contentedly into space, and soon slept through the night. A daily routine was established. Lisa's parents had difficulty establishing regularity.

Their family was very ready with advice: "You are spoiling her. You are not consistent. You are pushing her to do things she is not ready for. You are making her strain too hard to learn new skills." New skills she learned by leaps and bounds and she was doing the straining all by herself. She walked and talked sooner than the other babies they knew and she was forever exploring and finding out.

One day, on a walk in the park, a stranger watched her and then said, "Your child is remarkable. She is surely gifted." (It is surprising how many parents hear their child described as gifted for the first time during a visit to the park!) This first experience, this little remark rang true with what Lisa's parents already suspected. It still came as a shock and they reacted with mixed feelings.



For further confirmation they asked the pediatrician, who concurred with this perception. They now understood why she was different and a shower of questions rained over them. Will we be equal to that great responsibility? Do we share this new insight with friends and family or will they think we are bragging? Must we do more to stimulate her?

My advice to Lisa's parents: Giftedness is the special inner agenda which follows its own process. You, the parents, are the gardeners in charge of this small plant which will surprise you as it flowers, while you tend its soil and nourish it well. Within this framework it will do its own growing. Relax and be patient. Share your joy and your concerns with others and don't let it keep you from your own growth.

In the next column I will describe further the interaction between Lisa and her parents as she goes through her process of growing.

Dr. Annemarie Roeper is a Consultant on the gifted in Oakland, CA and author of the book, *Educating Children for Life*. She is also co-founder of the Roeper City and Country School and the *Roeper Review*.



INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES

Karen C. Nelson

Research Skills for Elementary Students

As this column is being written, our university is hosting a summer enrichment program for rural gifted students. Even our youngest participants—gifted children who have just finished kindergarten—have been developing research skills in the college library and in field-based observation of animal habitats.

As soon as they're able to read, gifted youngsters can be introduced to investigative skills that will prepare them to be producers, not just passive consumers, of knowledge. Two resources to help with beginning research skills are *The Research Book for Gifted Programs K-8* and *Three R's for the Gifted*.

The Research Book contains a taxonomy of research skills from the Northern California School Librarians' Association. The taxonomy is organized to indicate grade levels at which the skills should be introduced (entry level) as well as the grade level at which proficiency should be accomplished. Thus, it readily forms the basis for a scope and sequence of research skills—something no defensible gifted program should be without.

Although the list of skills is limited to the references and resources available in the classroom and library, it provides a good starting point and a model for development of a more inclusive scope and sequence of investigative skills which should include the research methodologies of the physical and social sciences (guidelines for science research were discussed in a previous column, Vol. 3, #4) and the use of the computer in accessing and organizing information, simulating experiments and analyzing data.

Activities included in the primary section of *The Research Book* develop skill in observation, book research and researching a topic. For grades 4-6 a research process is introduced. There are practice activities and guidelines for projects that include producing a mini-newspaper based on a work of fiction and conducting biographical research on gifted persons. Activities for grades 7-8 emphasize self-directed research and creative approaches to products. A process is provided for field investigation in a cemetery and for producing a local history reference book.

The Research Book is a good resource for a gifted resource program or classroom. *Three R's for the Gifted* is a curriculum kit that provides lesson modules that can be used as learning centers for the enrichment of the gifted (and other bright students) in the regular

classroom. The kit was developed "by and with the rural teacher for schools with no formal gifted program to depend on" (*Teacher's Manual*, p.1). The rural itinerant gifted specialist will also find it a good supplemental tool to share with regular classrooms.

A Resource Knowledge Test is provided to pretest students to determine which modules they can benefit by using. Though primarily designed for students to use independently, several tools are provided to help a teacher monitor student progress. These include forms for: Student/Teacher Contract, Progress Conference Report, Student Plan and Student/Teacher Evaluation Form.

Besides a Teacher's Manual, the kit consists of 19 modules (separate booklets) covering a range of research tools and reference skills as well as practice with resource materials. Some of the topics are the same as those covered in *The Research Book*: almanacs and atlases, dictionary, encyclopedia and *Readers Guide*, magazines, journals and newspapers. Other modules cover telephone books, *Who's Who*, courthouse records, government documents, historical sites and museums. Still other modules address human resources: business people, college and vocational personnel, public officials, teachers. One especially nice module for rural schools covers indigenous resources: local people with knowledge gained through experience or travel.

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Karen C. Nelson, Ph.D., is Coordinator of the graduate program in gifted education at Emporia State University in Kansas. She has been a public school teacher, curriculum editor, writer and poet.

THE READING ROOM

Like fantasy, science fiction is a favorite genre among gifted readers, so during this visit and the next we will discuss science fiction books, one written with an adult audience in mind, the others (a trilogy) written for young readers. These books have been chosen for a shared theme that should be of special interest to gifted individuals.

We are constantly reminded that our planet, and consequently the human race, is endangered by the possibility of nuclear war, pollution, global warming, ozone depletion and other hazards. British author John Wyndham and American Virginia Hamilton have written powerful and intriguing stories in which hope for the future is literally in our minds. According to both writers it is not brilliant individual minds that will save us, but a new mental power of connectedness. Though they take quite different views of *how* the new mind powers work for survival, the important truth to both authors is that minds can be joined.

Wyndham's book, *The Chrysalids*, begins many generations after a nuclear war (The Tribulation) which has nearly devastated the earth. Isolated tribes of humans exist in Labrador and "the big island of Newf," religiously defending against mutations. Their defense is to kill or burn any mutant plant or animal and drive mutant humans into "The Fringes," areas where ambient radiation levels make life chancey at best. They believe that survival

depends on preserving the True Image of Man, and trying to rebuild the world of "The Old People."

The narrator of the book is a boy named David, who has a secret mutation—the ability to communicate telepathically with a number of other children (from his village and from others) who share his difference. When they realize that their minds and abilities are new, they are forced to hide them to avoid the fate of other mutants. At the same time they begin to question their faith in the True Image, reasoning that somehow The Old People may have been, themselves, responsible for The Tribulation. Perhaps they had some flaw that should *not* be preserved.

Their secret becomes harder to maintain when David's little sister, Petra, is born with telepathic power so intense that it cannot be easily hidden. Whenever the child, who has not yet learned to control her transmissions, is in trouble, she sends out distress signals so intense that all the others are irresistibly drawn to her from near or far and then must try to explain what brought them.

The older group are young adults when the inevitable happens and their secret is discovered. Mental differences are far more threatening to the human community, they discover, than physical differences. For these differences do not show; and these differences, it is feared, will give the mutants power over their normal counterparts. They

are hunted with unprecedented ferocity, not only by fellow villagers, but by aggressive Fringe dwellers.

The themes for discussion in this book are many; the new telepathic powers shared by David and the others are a more intense version of giftedness as defined by those who believe it to be not mere intellectual power, but the capacity for greater empathy, emotional sensitivity and understanding. One of the group determines to renounce her powers and "become normal"; the result is tragic. Not only can she not renounce her uniqueness, she cannot survive isolation. Hope for the future, Wyndham suggests, lies in overcoming the separation that keeps us competing rather than cooperating. The individual self is vital to Wyndham's new people, but as a unique contribution to the larger, communal self. What is the value of difference? How can differences be balanced with the need for a community of man? These are some of the survival questions this book and Hamilton's "Justice Cycle," to be discussed next visit, address.



Stephanie Tolan, from Columbus, Ohio, is a noted author of children's books and one of the authors of the award-winning book, *Guiding the Gifted Child*.

Early in middle school, students are less concerned with adult issues, and more with those of leaving childhood. There is a strong sense of togetherness among friends, and little sense of oneself as distinct from others. According to Elkind (1984), some adolescents show a tendency to develop 'patchwork selves,' in their efforts to reach a premature sense of identity (cited in Buescher & Higham, 1989, p. 105). Later in middle school a sense of personal identity emerges, friendships differentiate, as people discover both their personal strengths and limitations. We expected to find that in sixth grade students would indicate a greater sense of well being, self esteem, and self respect. We expected that by eighth grade students would be more likely to perceive themselves critically, and that these critical perceptions would relate to particular problem areas. Perhaps growth in middle school comes with costs.

Throughout middle school, there are social differences between female and male students. We predicted strong differences in self perception for these two groups. For example, the culture for males suggests that they may live up to an image of strength and power by not showing uncertainty or feelings of vulnerability. Rosenberg (1989) has summarized some of the literature for boys this way: "Boys are more likely to value interpersonal control or dominance in their relationships with others" (p. 276). For females the culture suggests that they be more accommodating and show themselves well in appearance, but not so much in their mental abilities. As Silverman (1986) noted, "The female peer group adds to this pressure to conform by rejecting a girl who appears too smart or too successful. There is an unwritten code against females excelling: if someone breaks the code, she is punished"

(p. 51). As a result, we predicted that males would indicate more self respect than females, since this issue taps a sense of personal strength and power. Females would tend to be critical of themselves physically, as a way of demonstrating their willingness to accommodate to the culture's definition of femaleness.

GIFTED STUDENTS IN OUR MIDDLE SCHOOL

In our school district, we are fortunate to have a gifted program (Extended Studies Program—ESP) that began in 1978. Students in 3rd, 4th, and 5th grade may be asked to take a test to determine their eligibility. Students' entrance into the program then depends on their interest, faculty approval, and whether or not they would benefit from the program. The program for 3rd, 4th, and 5th grades is run in a way that allows the children to choose any area of interest and pursue it. In this regard, it is created and driven by student interest.

In the Middle School, where we conducted our study, ESP in the 6th grade deals primarily with history and English. The 7th graders choose projects in fields they wish to explore. Some are writing and performing plays, others are studying and working on solutions to ecological problems. A program for 8th grade is expected to begin next year, and a program for 9th-12th grades is in the planning stages. Hopefully this program will be multifaceted and allow students to take their interests in any direction, much like ESP in 3rd, 4th, and 5th grades.

In addition to these programs, 7th and 8th grade students study science in either regular or advanced science classes. In our study, level of academic placement in science was used as the measure of "giftedness," because we collected our data from groups of students without names and could not know which students participated in the ESP programs. Many of the students in the advanced sections of science had been

(Continued on page 9)

Table 1
Numbers of students by sex, grade, and science class level

Sex	Grade					
	6		7		8	
	Science Class Level					
	Regular	Regular	Accelerated	Regular	Accelerated	Total
Female	27	10	11	13	8	69
Male	27	7	9	7	9	59
Total	54	17	20	20	17	128

Average rating for each questionnaire item ¹

	Mean	Standard Deviation
1. Happy with life	4.05	.79
2. Good things in life compared to bad ones	3.48	.646
3. Feel good as most other people	3.40	.885
4. Positive attitude about self	3.51	.884
5. Want more self respect	3.11	1.48
6. Sureness about identity	4.05	.936
7. Frequency of mixed up feelings	3.42	1.133
8. Want to know who you are	3.34	1.188
9. Nervousness upon meeting new person	3.78	1.126
10. Self consciousness	2.38	1.367
11. Opinion of others important	3.32	1.128
12. Friends' effects on your decisions	3.40	2.10
13. Friends' influence	3.23	.96
14. Self reference as ugly or overweight	3.48	1.363
15. Believe overweight	4.23	1.13
16. Believe ugly	3.99	1.007
17. Willingness to accept compliments	4.19	1.067
18. Believe athletic	3.74	1.071
19. Enjoy sports	4.25	1.135
20. Performance in academic subjects	4.11	.898
21. Fear of AIDS	3.08	1.388
22. How concerned about environment	3.72	1.08
23. How concerned about ozone	3.52	1.145
24. How concerned about nuclear war	3.47	1.328
25. Pessimistic attitude	4.34	1.051
26. Opinion importance of opposite sex	3.49	1.168
27. Like opposite sex	4.12	.966
28. Feel useless	3.51	.932
29. Positive self attitude	3.83	.962
30. Importance of religion	3.03	1.467
31. Importance of religious insult	3.03	1.509
32. Proud of religion	3.90	1.255
33. Think prejudice thoughts	3.75	1.181
34. Drugs in high school	4.81	.607
35. Resist drugs	4.72	.732
36. Contemplate suicide	4.00	.794
37. Commit suicide	4.71	.774
38. Successful in future	4.23	.861
39. Compare to parents income	3.92	1.012
40. Relationship with mother	4.33	.911
41. Relationship with father	3.96	1.312
42. Relationship with siblings	4.49	.753
43. Relationship with friends	4.48	.753
44. Same friends in five years	3.39	1.154
45. Satisfied with quality of current friends	4.41	.888
46. Forced self to vomit	4.61	.983
47. Tried drugs	4.72	.826
48. Smoke cigarettes regularly	4.79	.823
49. Setting of drinking (omit if not drink)	2.96	1.56
50. Questionnaire worth time	4.81	.391
51. Answer survey honestly	4.88	.361

¹ On scale from 1=most negative rating to 5=most positive rating.

Rating scales differed among the questions (see page 12).

² Means for grades 6,7,8 significantly different ($p \leq .05$) by one-way ANOVA.

³ Means for genders significantly different ($p \leq .05$) by one-way ANOVA.

⁴ Means for gifted (advanced or regular science in grades 7 & 8) significantly different ($p \leq .05$) by one-way ANOVA.

selected for the district's gifted education program in grades three through six, as described above. We were interested in finding out if students in enriched science classes responded differently to

certain questions from the way those in the regular science classes did. What happens in adolescence for students in the faster academic track?

We predicted that giftedness would act in combination with grade level and gender in its relation to a student's self esteem and sense of well being. For example, we expected that in eighth grade gifted females would show greater self esteem than non-gifted females of the same age though these same individuals may show less self esteem than males whether gifted or not. We predicted that gifted students would be more concerned about questions of the environment, and rate themselves more positively on academic strength. We also thought they would respond neutrally to the appearance questions, knowing their

priorities lie primarily in the academic areas. We expected to find some indication that the "gifted" students might doubt their own abilities (Buescher & Higham, 1989), although they are clearly academically talented.

DESIGN AND METHOD

Middle school students in five science classes were asked by their science teachers to participate voluntarily in a study designed by two seventh grade students (the authors) by filling out our questionnaire anonymously. All of the 133 students in these science classes chose to complete a questionnaire, and they were given class time to complete it. At the end of the questionnaire one question asked students if they had answered honestly. Five questionnaires were omitted because these students responded that they did not answer the questionnaire at least "somewhat honestly." All students in 6th grade attended the same level of science class (Regular). In 7th and 8th grades

students attended either regular (Regular) or advanced (Accelerated) science classes. The numbers of students in our sample at each grade level are shown in Table 1 (on page 7).

We designed a 51 question survey to ask questions about a number of topics (see page 12 for a sample of the questions). At the beginning of the questionnaire, we asked the students to answer basic questions about themselves such as sex, age, grade, favorite and least favorite subjects, and science class assignment. We then asked the students to answer the 51 questions honestly. The questionnaire was designed as follows: a question was asked with five numbers (1-5) as choices. The side for positive response set was varied in the version the students took, so a student could not know which end of the scale was positive or negative simply by its position.

RESULTS

Table 2 (on page 8) shows the means (average) and standard deviations of the ratings for each question of our survey. Many responses were answered in a strongly positive direction. These were a sense of general happiness, acceptance of a compliment, enjoyment of sports, liking of the opposite sex, good relationship with friends and family members. Also positive in nature were our students' strong rejection of drugs, drinking and smoking. Problem areas involved self consciousness, the need for more self respect, some vulnerability to others' opinions, fear of AIDS, concern for ozone layer depletion or nuclear war.

We examined the differences in responses to each question based upon students' grade, gender, and level of science class (accelerated or regular). Using a computer program, we performed analyses of variance (Continued on page 10)

Table 3
Average Ratings of Academic Competence

Grade					
7			8		
Science Class Level					
Sex	Regular	Accelerated	Regular	Accelerated	Total
Female	4.2 [10]	4.727 [11]	3.385 [13]	4.75 [8]	4.19 [42]
Male	3 [7]	4 [9]	3.714 [7]	4.333 [9]	3.812 [32]
Total	3.706 [17]	4.4 [20]	3.5 [20]	4.529 [17]	4.027 [74]

(ANOVAs) to test the degree to which the differences we found in grouping our results by grade, gender, or level of science class could relate to these groups or simply by chance. The smaller the probability of the difference's occurring by chance, the more likely it is that a given grouping factor was related to the observed effect in the results. An effect by grouping factor was considered statistically significant by ANOVA when a difference of the observed magnitude would be expected by chance only in 5 or fewer times out of 100 (p.05).

Grade

Table 3 (p. 9) shows the question ratings that differed significantly by ANOVA by grade. For several of the questions there was steady change as the grade advanced. Not surprisingly, interest in and liking of the opposite sex climbed evenly from 6th to 8th grades. Ratings of self consciousness for Question 10, wondering about what other people thought about you when entering a room of unknown people, declined during middle school. It was interesting that the 7th graders felt the most mixed up about what they wanted or who they wanted to be (Question 7). For females, worries about being ugly or overweight increased steadily during middle school (Questions 14,16). This increase took place in the female students, not the males. We were surprised to learn that almost all students in 6th grade said they had never experimented with drugs or alcohol. There were, however, a few more people in 7th and 8th grades who thought they might try these substances in high school. This was originally expected mostly in 8th grade.

Gender

Some of the questions, mostly about appearance and being over-

weight, were significantly related to gender, with females showing great concern on these items (Questions 14, 16). We found that many of the males we tested weren't concerned about the questions pertaining to self-consciousness, and tended to answer that it didn't matter to them what other people thought of them (Question 11). And we also found that more females said they cared about the opinion of the opposite sex, than did the males (Question 26).

Significantly more girls than boys said that they thought they were ugly. Fortunately, females of our school didn't appear to have a problem with bulimia, but they answered the questions about being overweight with an attitude that subconsciously could be the beginning of a bad habit. From Question 5, it was found that males had more respect for themselves. For females, self esteem and self respect was significantly lower by the eighth grade. Self confidence decreased steadily from sixth to eighth grade.

Gifted Students (Accelerated in Science)

The analyses for gifted students (accelerated in science) occurred for 7th and 8th grades only, since all students attend the same type of science class in 6th grade. In general there were fewer differences between gifted and regular students' responses than between different grades or between male and female students. The gifted students were distinctive only in their answers to two questions.

As shown in Table 3 (p. 9), there were significant differences between rating of academic competence for Regular vs. Accelerated

Science students by 3-way ANOVA ($F = 21.623$, $p.0001$). Looking further at this table it is also clear that an important pattern involved gender and grade level. Between 7th and 8th grades for students in regular sciences clas-

ses, the gender ratings for higher academic competence reverse. In 7th grade these females rated their academic competence

higher than that of boys, but by 8th grade boys rated themselves more highly than girls. This rating pattern fits with a common pattern on gender differences in adolescence when girls begin to downplay their sense of competence. Among the students in Accelerated science, however, the pattern between males and females was much more equivalent. Thus, it appears that the Accelerated science group perceived themselves as academically strong, with females retaining a strong sense of competence. In statistical terms, there were significant effects of gender, of the interaction between gender and grade, and of science class grouping. The advanced placement group also rated themselves as having a more positive attitude about themselves than did the regular group (Question 29).

The gifted students, like the older students, were more aware and fearful of AIDS, but did not differ significantly from the other students on environmental concerns such as concern for the ozone layer. Even gifted females were fearful of being ugly or overweight, though less so than girls in regular classes. In this sample, girls, and more so gifted girls, rated themselves as strongly academically as boys.

(Continued on page 11)

For females, self esteem and self respect was significantly lower by eighth grade. Self confidence decreased steadily from sixth to eighth grade.

DISCUSSION

Many of our predictions proved to be accurate, however some of the results turned out differently from our expectations. We predicted a decline in general happiness between 6th grade and 8th grade, but we did not find a significant change in general sense of well being across the years.

As predicted, females rated their self respect significantly lower than did males. Females tended to be more self conscious and concerned about others' opinions of them, though these concerns had abated by 8th grade to some extent. Clearly females had greater concerns about being ugly and overweight. Our predictions were only partially accurate when it came to giftedness, and questions about the environment. The gifted groups tended only to be more concerned about AIDS than the regular groups. We think perhaps this is due to the fact that the gifted group may have been more educated about the seriousness of this problem. Still, we would have expected greater concern among the gifted group about the ozone layer for the same reason, and we did not find differences in response to this question. It was difficult to find differences for the gifted group, even taking gender and grade into account in 3-way ANOVAs.

Clearly group differences in this study are sensitive to the social context, be they those of the overall culture or of the immediate educational setting. People grouped for one reason, say level of academic ability in science, showed differences mainly in their assessment of themselves academically but not in other questions. Males and females differed primarily on those items on which the overall culture may provide quite different social roles for them. Happily in this context, the females in Accelerated Science in this study had a strong academic

self concept that one hopes to see continued in high school.

Perhaps our results overall suggest the strength of social roles in defining and reinforcing how one thinks of oneself. There are few social role elaborations or differences in life opportunities in Middle School based on academic acceleration in science. There are far more elaborations based upon age and gender. Further, results such as these are used to bolster the argument that gifted youth do not differ in their self concept, self esteem, and therefore do not have distinctive needs. Yet, if people are so strongly influenced by their social training and expectations, it reminds us again how important it is that each student in a school, including the gifted, find an environment that helps to support them and to encourage them to be their best.

There are some inherent limits in our study. The subjects come from a relatively similar upper middle class background, in a school district in which 95% of the high school graduates attend college. The small number of students in the study in each gender, age, and science class category makes it more difficult to achieve statistically significant results. Finally, it is difficult to produce multiple choice questions that can best express everyone's feelings. Some subjects may feel differently about a question, but be forced to choose the response that most closely interprets their feelings. To explore this possibility we interviewed thirteen 6th graders, seven 7th graders, and nine 8th graders who volunteered to stay after school to answer questions regarding their personal feelings. This way we got a more intimate interpretation of our subjects' thoughts, instead of their simply circling an answer that may have confined their way of thinking.

We are developing a third questionnaire, and we plan to interview the same subjects again to observe

their development. In order to make a cross cultural comparison, a friend has translated our third questionnaire into German and she will administer it to the same age group in Basel, Switzerland. We believe this further work will lead to even more information about the patterns of our childhood.

Note: This paper was presented at the AGATE XIII Conference in Syracuse, NY, October, 1989, when Dana Fox & Shana Katzel were 12 & 13. Anyone wishing to replicate the study should contact Dana H. Fox at 182 Palmerston Road, Rochester, NY, 14618 for a complete copy of the questionnaire.

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Dana H. Fox, age 14, is a student at Brighton High School in Brighton, NY. She plans to continue actively studying and learning about growth and development.

Shana Katzel, age 15, is also a student at Brighton High. She loves working with children and hopes to pursue a career in pediatric medicine.



Inside Middle School: What Teenagers Think
By Shana Katzel and Dana Fox
 (Questionnaire not validated: for research purposes only)

Please answer the following, so that we will know something about you.

Sex: Male Female (circle one) Age: _____ Grade: _____

Favorite Subject (circle one):
 Science Math English Social Studies Foreign Language

Least favorite Subject (circle one):
 Science Math English Social Studies Foreign Language

Detentions this school year: How many? (circle one)
 0 - 5 6 - 10 11 - 15 16 - above

Which science class are you in? (circle one)
 6-Regular 7-Regular 7-ES 8-Regular 8-ES (Earth Science)

Here are some questions for our project. Please answer as honestly as possible. All answers are anonymous, and only effect the outcome of the statistics. (SAMPLE ITEMS)

- | | | | | | |
|--|--------------------|---|-------------------|---|-----------------|
| 1. In general, have you been happy with your life? | 1
Not at all | 2 | 3
Somewhat | 4 | 5
Very |
| 5. Do you wish you could have more respect for yourself? | 1
Often | 2 | 3
Occasionally | 4 | 5
Never |
| 7. How often do you feel mixed up about what you want or who you want to be? | 1
Often | 2 | 3
Sometimes | 4 | 5
Never |
| 10. If you were to enter a room full of unknown people, would you wonder what they were thinking of you? | 1
Yes | 2 | 3
Somewhat | 4 | 5
No |
| 11. How much would the opinion of these people matter to you? | 1
Very Much | 2 | 3
Somewhat | 4 | 5
Not at all |
| 13. How much do your friends' decisions influence your decisions? | 1
Very Much | 2 | 3
Somewhat | 4 | 5
Not at all |
| 14. How often do you find yourself saying that you are ugly or overweight? | 1
Often | 2 | 3
Sometimes | 4 | 5
Never |
| 16. Do you honestly think you are ugly? | 1
Very | 2 | 3
Somewhat | 4 | 5
Not at all |
| 20. How good are you at school in your academic subjects? | 1
Not very good | 2 | 3
Fairly good | 4 | 5
Very good |
| 21. How afraid are you of getting AIDS in your lifetime? | 1
Very | 2 | 3
Somewhat | 4 | 5
Not at all |
| 24. How concerned are you about nuclear war? | 1
Not at all | 2 | 3
Somewhat | 4 | 5
Very Much |
| 26. How much does the opinion of the opposite sex matter to you? | 1
Not at all | 2 | 3
Somewhat | 4 | 5
Very Much |
| 29. I have a positive attitude toward myself. | 1
No | 2 | 3
Somewhat | 4 | 5
Yes |
| 35. Do you think you could resist drugs? | 1
No | 2 | 3
Maybe | 4 | 5
Yes |
| 36. Have you ever seriously considered suicide? | 1
Yes | 2 | 3
Maybe | 4 | 5
No |
| 38. In fifteen years do you expect yourself to be successful in your life? | 1
Not at all | 2 | 3
Somewhat | 4 | 5
Very Much |
| 44. Have you ever tried to make yourself throw-up after eating? | 1
Many Times | 2 | 3
Once | 4 | 5
Never |
| 45. Have you ever tried drugs? | 1
Many Times | 2 | 3
Once | 4 | 5
Never |
| 49. Did you answer this questionnaire honestly? | 1
No | 2 | 3
Somewhat | 4 | 5
Yes |

Thank you very much for your help. We really appreciate your efforts. If you answered yes to the serious questions about throwing-up after eating, alcohol, drugs or thinking seriously about suicide, you should talk to a counselor or other responsible adult. We will not know who you are from this questionnaire, so we can only suggest that you get help. Dana Fox & Shana Katzel

felt we fit in with other kids. Then, somewhere along the line we just quit trying to succeed in school.

"Up until the 10th grade, I was a successful student.

Then, I became depressed and every night I just cried myself to sleep."

A few of us were actually told we were dumb or lazy. Others were told we were nerds.

"It is scary to demonstrate intelligence."

Still others were treated more politely and told we had learning disabilities. We were put in special classes and given remedial work.

Their superior intellectual ability is working overtime to help them compensate for problematic weaknesses caused by an undiagnosed learning disability. In essence, their gift masks the disability, and the disability masks the gift. (Baum, 1989, p. 12)

It is interesting what happened when we were put in those remedial classes. Our days were spent doing work which we knew was much too easy for us. It was trivial and incredibly boring.

"I told my Chapter I reading teacher that the books were way too easy for me. She snapped, 'If they were too easy I wouldn't have given them to you.'"

Also, having been removed from our regular classrooms for so much of the day, we had no access to the work the "regular" kids were learning, and so we fell further behind our classmates. Our interest in school waned.

Research has shown that a focus on weaknesses at the expense of developing gifts can result in poor self-esteem, a lack of motivation, depression, and stress... What is needed in addition to remediation is attention focused on the development of strengths, interests,

and superior intellectual capacities in their own right. The students need a stimulating educational environment that will enable them to fully develop their talents and abilities. (Baum, 1989, p. 12)

Some of us developed what we were told was "non-productive" behavior. Others feigned illness every morning in hope of staying home.

"The good days were when I misbehaved so much the teacher would forget to call on me to read."

Students attempting to read (look-say method) may feel like unwilling participants in Russian roulette, "Maybe I'll know it or maybe I'll be dead." (Vail, 1987, p. 188)

Almost all of us became so forgetful we almost never were prepared with the necessary pencils or books or homework assignments.

Some of us learned how to con our way through the day. We could talk our way out of doing any class assignment. Some of us barely passed English in school, but spent our time at home reading the classics well beyond grade level. We developed sophisticated computer programs and mapped the stars while failing basic math and science in school. We became recognized as champions in strategic games while barely passing social studies. We became the editor of the school paper, managing its operation, and writing letters to the editor of the local newspapers while being criticized for reporting "the other side" of the stories, and being reluctantly passed in English. We became accomplished and creative actors, artists and musicians, while flunking courses that insisted on rote memorization. In other words, we were being asked in school to suppress our creativity and to pursue rewards for robotic performance.

"When we declined the pressure to become robots, we were labeled dumb."

For some of us this forgetfulness and negative behavior actually had a positive side. Our classmates seemed to accept us more readily than they did years before when we were more successful students.

It was like a game. We learned how to create peer acceptance by clowning, by daydreaming and by acting negatively in class. This worked great. We were jerks and loving it. Well, not exactly loving it. Some students didn't want us around. They harassed us with taunts, hid our books and stole our possessions.

"I quit bringing a lunch to school because the other kids would always steal my lunch. Then, they would laugh when I found it stuffed in the drinking fountain."

Our education is built to adult specifications. Adults have decided what we need to know and how we are to learn it. If not conforming to their specifications, we are designated at risk and segregated as having learning problems. Adults isolated us from our class and friends, and called it "academic assistance" and "special education." They showed us the route to grade retention, as an alternative to advancement. They grouped us by age, and sub-grouped us by their measures of achievement. They emphasized rote memorization and suppressed our spontaneous creativity. They made reading a prerequisite to testing our skills.

We need individuals with highly developed visual-spatial abilities for advancement in the arts, technology and business. These are the creative leaders of society. We need to protect their differences in childhood and enable them to develop their unique talents in supportive environments at home and at school. (Silverman and Freed, 1991, p. 6)

With teachers and siblings and sometimes (Continued on page 14)

even parents treating us as if we were practically uneducable and reprimanding us to quit being so lazy, we began to doubt our own intelligence. Some of us sunk to levels of depression, confused about why nobody else seemed to be continually singled out for reprimands the way we seemed to be. A couple of us seriously wondered how long we could continue to live in such an unfair world.

There are no easy answers or simple responses to the underachievement issue, especially in the case of the gifted child. We must be willing to look beyond a child's poor performance in school to recognize those instances when the bright underachiever is exhibiting gifted behavior. (Emerick, 1989, p. 11)

In this environment, 25% of the students do not—cannot—meet those standards of conformity. Twenty-five percent of the students in our schools decide they would rather drop-out than become robots.

"In business, a manager would be fired if 25% of the employees quit. However, nobody seems to notice that the students are not making it."

However, despite being labeled and despite being so ready to give up, deep down (on our "good" days) we knew we were not dumb. We knew when the teacher was stating incorrect information about volcanoes, or bottle nose dolphins or the Civil War; we knew how a math problem or a computer program could be completed more efficiently or accurately; we knew we did not belong in those remedial classes.

A good fit between the student's developmental levels and the

academic requirements of the school promotes joyful, solid learning. Mismatches can create learning disabilities, distort personal relationships, cap creativity and impoverish the overall quality of a human life. Talented, intelligent children are not simply a national resource, they are a universal treasure. To dull the glow of their promise through inappropriate placement is a form of child abuse. (Vail, 1987, p. 29)

In the words of Karl Mecklenburg, (who uses his dyslexic skills to advantage as a linebacker for the Denver Broncos football team), "We did not have learning disabilities. The teachers had teaching disabilities." (Mecklenburg, 1991)

A student who learns one way but not another isn't being purposefully uncooperative...Often, a smart kid's school problem arises from a mismatch between his learning style and the methods and the materials used in the curriculum. When this happens, it is the student who is diagnosed as learning disabled, instead of the materials being labeled inappropriate. (Vail, 1987, p. 8)

The Seven Intelligences

<i>Intelligence</i>	<i>Types</i>
Logical-mathematical	Scientist Mathematician
Linguistic	Poet Journalist
Musical	Composer Violinist
Spatial	Navigator Sculptor
Bodily-kinesthetic	Dancer Athlete
Interpersonal	Therapist Salesman
Intrapersonal	Person with detailed, accurate self-knowledge

Gardner, H., & Hatch, T. (1989). Multiple intelligences go to school, *Educational Researcher*, 18 (8), p. 6.

THE PEER GROUP

Thus, somehow despite the judgement of the people around us, we knew we were smart. Even in the midst of the failures in school, there had been a few successes here and there. A few of us in high school empathized with students in junior high who still had so many years ahead of them. We thought of information we wished we had known when we were in junior high. We figured that if we could share with them some of our hints for successes, we might spare them some of the intense pain we had suffered.

With that as our objective, we formed our peer group. Tired of adults in the educational system telling us what we needed, we decided to determine our own needs and discover our own solutions.

Thirty-three of us met that first afternoon. We were a motley crew ranging from fifth grade to college juniors. We represented several private schools, the University of Colorado, two public school districts and several of us were home schooled. We shared our successes with each other and learned that there were others who also felt smart on the inside and who were treated as if they were dumb. There were others who were socially outgoing, but internally alone. It was a phenomenal feeling to look around the room and realize we were not alone.

"It was a true learning environment to see there were other kids like me."

"I started to understand other kids, and they started to understand me."

We parted that night, determined to continue meeting so that we (Continued on page 15)

could eventually beat the system. For six months, we met and discussed how to succeed in a system that had pigeonholed us on a dead-end path. For six months, we commiserated when we felt we were treated unfairly by teachers or other students. For six months, we looked at what was successful in our lives.

"The peer group helped me pass through the tests—the ones in school and the ones life gives me."

We shared with each other how to take notes, how to make friends and how to remember homework assignments.

"It's amazing how much easier school can be when we force ourselves to complete the homework. And even though it is extremely boring, it doesn't take too much time from what we would rather be learning about."

We began talking to our teachers and discovered that some of them were actually allies, instead of the arch enemies we had believed they were.

"Some teachers are not so bad once you get to know them. My science teacher said he finally realized I knew the information better than anybody in the class and that my biggest problem was just reading the tests."

We learned about diets which resulted in amazing improvements in school.

"All I did was quit eating wheat and dairy, and my grades went right up to A's and B's."

We began to study and found we could actually be successful without much work at all.

"It's all in how you think about school. If I stand in a different place and look in a different way, I can see school a little differently."

We learned about Howard Gardner's theory of Multiple Intelligences. (Gardner & Hatch, 1989. See sidebar, p. 14.) We began to understand that schools generally only assess two types of intelligence—the Logical-Mathematical Intelligence and the Linguistic Intelligence. Some of us who were proficient in one of the five intelligences not usually assessed in school were relieved to realize that all seven intelligences are important in the real world.

"It's interesting: Awareness has been raised recently about misconceptions derived from physical differences between people. We are correcting our misconceptions about the color of our skin, and deficits in physical abilities. There is less awareness of misconceptions derived from mental differences."

"There is nothing wrong with me. I just learn differently than you do."

Buoyed by our successes, we decided to sponsor a Learning Fair (to be held in Boulder on September 21). At this fair, we plan to learn even more about the seven intelligences, to determine which intelligence is our greatest area of strength, and to learn about student achievements in a variety of intelligences.

However, there is an objective even greater than all that we plan to learn. The greatest objective for the Learning Fair is that students who were just as lonesome and depressed and miserable as we were will attend the fair and realize that they are not so weird after all. They will realize that they, too, can be successful!!!

This is only the beginning. We have found a way to feel better about ourselves. Through the peer group we are sharing our experiences and have actually begun to achieve some success at school.

For the first time, we feel we can cope with school. We have a long way to go, but we are feeling an optimism we have never felt before.

For assistance in setting up such a peer group in your community, request information from Jeremiah Young, 1548 Old Tale Road, Boulder, CO 80303, (303) 443-3154. There is also a parent group (Parents Assisting Student Success) which meets to better understand and support students with high ability and low achievement. We would appreciate information about any groups which form as a result of reading this article.

The authors acknowledge the generous assistance of Albert Roark, Roger Salaman, and Porsche Young in fostering the success of the peer group. The authors thank Ashley Crill and Kris Roon for their assistance in compiling this article.

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Jeremiah Young is a ninth grader who enjoys soccer, math and computer games. Demetrius Johnson is a high school senior who is also enrolled in classes at the University of Colorado.

THE HIGHLY GIFTED

Highly Gifted Children In Isolated Rural Areas—(Part II)

Highly gifted, rurally isolated children share unique characteristics and concerns, which were outlined in the last issue. This issue's column provides specific suggestions to the parents, teachers, and counselors who work with these children.

*** Begin early.** Highly gifted children growing up in isolated areas need educational and emotional support in their earliest years. Their difference from other children is accentuated simply by the fact that there are fewer children in the community to begin with, and far fewer gifted children with whom to associate for either academic or social activities. In addition, fewer gifted education programs are available. Early identification gives both the family and the school time to access resources and plan interventions.

*** Respect the validity of rural culture.** Today's media (especially television) emphasize the experiences of suburban and urban children. Immensely popular programs such as *Sesame Street*, *The Wonder Years*, *Doogie Howser*, *The Simpsons*, *The Cosby Show*, and *Beverly Hills 90210* are culturally based squarely within the inner city and suburbia. School textbooks, too, focus on the suburban and urban audiences which comprise most of their sales. It is tempting to assume that rural families share these experiences and values, but they may not. The young violin prodigy who prefers to play the fiddle for a local contra dance rather than classical music with a symphony orchestra two hours away may be responding to what is both good and acceptable within her own culture.

*** Plan for financial support.** Although the cost of living in some isolated rural areas may be less than in the city, the cost of talent development for a highly gifted child is not. Private lessons, tutoring, the regional Talent Search programs and early college coursework not only cost as much as they do for metropolitan residents, but the added and sometimes prohibitive cost of transportation must also be considered. Even school acceleration and grade skipping, often a cost-effective educational intervention for a rurally isolated public school, can backfire financially without adequate planning. Parents need to understand clearly that grade acceleration leaves them with less time to save for the child's college education, and less time to search out scholarship sources. Early identification has the added benefit of alerting parents that financial adjustments, as well as educational ones, may need to be made.

*** Help highly gifted rural girls deal with difficult decisions based on their gender.** The rural homemaker and farm wife traditionally is not considered a second-class citizen, but an essential partner in the family's economic structure. Nevertheless, highly gifted girls from rural areas face a double bind with gender issues. The family and community sometimes expect an early marriage or a traditional career choice of a young woman bright enough to train for almost any career. The young woman may feel she is "breaking all the rules" of her culture if she follows her own dreams. Conversely, the highly gifted girl who chooses the early marriage and more traditional rural lifestyle can

miss out on the intellectual stimulation advanced education provides. Highly gifted rural girls need to be taught assertiveness in obtaining appropriate educational opportunities, and the skills of self-education and life planning, in order to maximize their options.

*** Use the culturally accepted institutions of rural life to support the development of highly gifted children.** Organizations such as 4-H Clubs, Scouts, the Junior Grange, Rainbow Girls, and church youth fellowships offer some surprisingly sophisticated educational and travel opportunities for young people, and are well-accepted within rural communities. The 4-H Club program not only offers projects in raising livestock, sewing, gardening, and home canning, but also provides programs in areas as diverse as model rocketry, leadership, reading, electricity, and computers. Teaching methods similar to current practices in gifted education are often used in these rural youth programs. Advanced leadership training, career development, and travel opportunities for older students are available, and sometimes are more culturally acceptable to rural families than similar opportunities provided by public and private educational institutions.

Growing up highly gifted and in rural isolation is not necessarily a disadvantage. Although access to appropriate educational resources must be much more carefully researched and planned, rural highly gifted children also share the benefits of nature as a science laboratory, quiet places in which to reflect, and an independence and autonomy not always available to their city cousins—elements which can support the inner dynamics of a creative and intellectual life.

Kathi Kearney is Founder of the Hollingworth Center for Highly Gifted Children in Auburn, Maine, and a doctoral candidate at Teachers College, Columbia University.

IN SEARCH OF SERENDIPITY



Creative Ventures And Encounters

Jerry Flack
Tour Guide

Crazy Calendars

It is not too soon to begin thinking about 1992, or the gift giving for Christmas and Chanukah, 1991. Decorative calendars have become staples among the gifts given at the year's end. The 1992 versions may already be found in gift shops and bookstores. But why go out and buy a 1992 calendar if you have creative kids in your home or classroom? Store-purchased calendars may be glossy and beautiful, but the purchase of them robs gifted students of the opportunity to flex their own creative muscles. Family members can work together on the creation of calendars to surprise teachers and relatives.

First, have students determine the subject or theme of the calendar they want to create. The choice may flow from each student's own passion, be it dinosaurs, space, cats, Egyptian history, Care Bears, or even Teenage Mutant Turtles! First-time calendar creators will be most comfortable using their own storehouse of information. Older students may first want to decide whom they will honor with their calendar creation, and choose a motif or theme based on the interests of the intended recipient.

Once the calendar topic has been chosen, the calendar creator should brainstorm a long list of people, places, events, trivia, dates, and other data associated with the topic choice. Next, the artist should brainstorm a varied and comprehensive list of resources for locating information about the calendar topic and the days of the year. Information about a nearly in-

finite variety of topics is found in standard reference works such as almanacs and encyclopedias. A book of days will be a vital resource, too, since the 365 days of the calendar year are the focal point of the creative exercise. Of course, a 1992 calendar is a must.

The most treasured calendars contain original student artwork, but for folks who are stick-figure experts, there are other alternatives. Junk mail often contains beautiful photographs that may be clipped and used to pictorially decorate a calendar. Back issues of periodicals such as *National Geographic*, *Smithsonian*, and *National Wildlife* may be purchased for as little as 5 to 10 cents in thrift stores and used book stores. A neighbor may have a stack of *Arizona Highways* to give away. Single clipped photos may be used for calendar artwork, or many photos and illustrations may be combined to create a series of 12 collages, one for each month.

Once both informational and visual material have been collected, the young calendar artist is ready to design and storyboard the whole product. To begin, the student asks which illustrations, drawings, and information will best serve in the telling of the story of January? Then she moves on to each of the remaining 11 months. Once the storyboard or layout scheme has been determined, the artist next procures all the materials needed: posterboard, construction paper, colored pens, crayons, scissors, glue, yarn, etc. The materials list will vary according to the design the artist chooses.

Materials in hand, the artist draws the illustration to accompany the January dates. If the calendar is for Uncle Sal who loves silly riddles and corny jokes, a cartoon character may be the artistic focus of the illustration for January. The spotlight on February might be a student-generated illustration of a bad pun, or a riddle. (Continued on page 18)



ANTENNA

Current Developments in Gifted Education

As I reflect on 20 years of advocacy for gifted children, I realize that it has consisted primarily of whining—righteous whining, to be sure—but too often ineffectual.

We originally depended on teachers to ensure that all kids' needs were met in the classroom. Many dedicated teachers tried to do just that. However, as class size increased and budgets decreased, even the most competent professionals found themselves overwhelmed with the impossibility of being all things to all children.

So frustrated parents banded together to speak up for their children's rights. And they made some progress. Exemplary programs for gifted and talented students developed around the country, and their success was openly credited to parent involvement. Unfortunately that age-old enemy of

quality education—**FUNDING**—intervened, and many excellent programs were short-lived.

Two decades later, we continue to complain, with good reason. We are losing some of our brightest students, our creative leaders, the hope of our future—to drugs, crime, suicide, apathy, mediocrity. Despite years of effort, teachers and parents have not yet succeeded in helping them.

I have charged—indeed challenged—parents to take action, to *do something* that will have a positive impact their children's education. They have tried. The battle has just been too slow and too political to have any long-term effect on all the gifted children that desperately need help. Maybe now it's time for the youth who are suffering the most to speak up, to band together, to respond constructively.

Elsewhere in this issue of *Understanding Our Gifted* you have the opportunity to read about 33 young people who are pulling themselves up by their "own bootstraps" (Young & Johnson, 1991). They are taking it upon themselves to figure out how to succeed in a "system that had pigeonholed us on a dead-end path" (p. 15). They aren't whining anymore. According to Jeremiah Young and Demetrius Johnson, "We have found a way to feel better about ourselves" (p. 15).

If gifted students are truly our future leaders, perhaps we should rely on them now. Perhaps they can solve what we have not. Perhaps kids are their own best advocates.

So now I charge young people—of all ages—to *do something*. Form your own advocate groups; join with parents in the push for appropriate education for all students. Speak up. You know first-hand what works and what doesn't. Ensure your future.

REFERENCE

- Young, J. & Johnson, D. (1991) Up by our own bootstraps. *Understanding Our Gifted*, 4(1), pages 1, 11-13.

Dorothy Knopper is a Private Consultant on Gifted Education in Colorado and the publisher of *Understanding Our Gifted*.

Creative Ventures (cont'd from page 17)

Once the artwork is complete, the student can concentrate on filling in the date panel for each month. One standard calendar frame may be created and duplicated to create the 12 frames needed. Next, the student enters the days of the week and the appropriate date, using a 1992 calendar (found in the backs of date and planning books, 1991 calendars and check registers). Now is the time to enter the information gathered from the book of days, encyclopedias, joke books, etc. If the calendar theme is inven-

tion, the birthdays of great inventors, and the dates of major breakthrough events (e.g., the Wright Brothers' first flight) or patents granted can be entered for daily blocks in the panel.

Students need not limit verbal entries to factual information. Uncle Sal's riddle, pun, and silly joke calendar may have some daily entries like these:

Cow Talk (Cattle Prattle) Day!

Snake Builder (Boa Constructor) Day!

The birthdays of famed jokesters, punsters, and humorists, dis-

covered in the research phase of the project, can also be highlighted.

When all the work is complete the 12 panels may be assembled and bound with yarn, staples, or other fasteners. The complete project is a creative 1992 calendar to decorate an older brother's room, mom's office, or grandmother's library. It will be a present lovingly created and greatly cherished.

Jerry Flack, Ph.D., is Associate Professor of Gifted Education at the University of Colorado, Colorado Springs, and author of *Inventing, Inventions and Inventors*.

from
parent

to
parent

Most parents of a gifted child have heard it in some form, at some time. "Well, Mrs. Ferguson, your daughter may be good at math, but her handwriting (or sociability, or organizational skill, or artistic ability, etc...) is not very good." Many people expect perfection from a gifted child and watch closely for their faults. Many teachers and coaches, otherwise known for tolerance and patience with their young charges as they struggle to become productive adults, can become remarkably intolerant and even cruel towards a gifted child's efforts in that same struggle.

Linda Biehl Molyneaux, a parent from Davenport, Iowa speaks for many parents when she writes:

"Acts and words of cruelty and prejudice aimed at gifted people are permitted where similar labeling or intolerance directed toward less fortunate people would not be.

"People identified as gifted are judged by a different standard from other people. Their mistakes are pounced upon and magnified. Their performance in school is watched and remarked upon...I think of this as 'backlash'.

"It starts with a true deficiency (work not turned in on time, insufficient interpretation of a line), but it is handled in a way that is all out of proportion to the nature of the offense. It needs to be understood. If it is not, it can undermine one's sense of self. It can lead to the gifted person making nearly superhuman efforts not to give any person the opening for criticism again. It can send some people into a shell or convince others that bristling aggression is the only way to respond to the world. The solution is to anticipate the backlash, and to understand it.

Anticipating backlash is difficult. A gifted child may expect criticism

but be startled by a tirade. However, understanding "backlash" is easier than anticipating it and may help a child survive it.

"Of course, the backlash is rooted in jealousy and envy...And even though adults know that by virtue of their age and experience they have more than the most gifted child—even when they know that it is not right to be jealous of the child—even so, the feelings persist. And even when the adult and child have similar gifts, the adult may nevertheless resent the child for having opportunities that were not available to the adult as a child."

Lisa Ferguson is from Haverill, Massachusetts and the parent of highly gifted children.

BACK ISSUES AVAILABLE

Back Issues are available on themes such as: Social/Emotional Needs, Learning Styles, Underachievement, Thinking Skills & Counseling the Gifted.

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Advanced Development

Volume 3 of *Advanced Development*, the first journal on adult giftedness, is now available. This unique journal focuses on inner development rather than achievement. The theme of this issue is "The Possible Human," and the featured theorist is Jean Houston. Etty Hillesum, our moral exemplar, was an inspirational person who attained inner peace during the holocaust. *Don't miss this issue!* Subscription rate is currently \$15 for individuals and \$20 for institutions. 777 Pearl St., Denver, CO 80203, (303) 837-8378.

CAG/T Fall Conference

The Colorado Assn. for Gifted & Talented sponsors its annual Fall Conference on Oct. 4 at the Red Lion Inn in Denver. The focus is "Schools For All Kids—Reform and Restructuring." For information on the one-day drive-in conference, please contact Kristi or Dennis Corash, (303) 979-0771.

Opportunities for Involvement in Global Awareness

The Global Awareness Division of the National Association for Gifted Children will be convening November 6-10, in Kansas City, Missouri, before and during the annual convention of the NAGC. For more information, please contact Lorene Porter, Roper City and Country School, P.O. Box 329, Bloomfield Hills, Michigan 48013. (313) 642-1500. General information about the conference can be obtained from Peter Rosenstein, Executive Director, NAGC. (202) 785-4268.

Global Awareness Conference

The Roper City and Country School is sponsoring a conference on Global Awareness in conjunction with its 50th anniversary celebration. This event will be held November 13-16 in Bloomfield Hills, Michigan. For more information, please contact Ruthann Brodsky, Editor, Roper Review, P.O. Box 329, Bloomfield Hills, Michigan 48013. (313) 642-1500.

Illinois Gifted Education Conference

The 1991 Illinois Gifted Education Conference will be held at the Hyatt Regency O'Hare Hotel, near O'Hare Airport, on December 2-4. For information, please contact Arlene Bloom, Conference Chairperson, (708) 798-6600.

FOCUS: TECHNOLOGY AND EDUCATION

Challenging the Gifted with Computer Software

Gregory C. Pattridge,
Ph.D.

Emerging Technologies and the Gifted

Jan K. France, M.S.

*The whole art of teaching
is only the art of
awakening the natural
curiosity of young minds
for the purpose of
satisfying them afterwards.*

—Anatole France—

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November—December, 1991

Volume 4, Issue 2

Emerging Technologies and the Gifted

Jan K. France, M.S.

*The wind and the waves are always
on the side of the ablest navigators.*

Edward Gibbon

Through technology, we are seeing a discovery of learning styles that will be carrying us to distant shores. We can determine on which shores we land by navigating through the emerging technologies that present themselves to us along the journey. By recombining and inventing new technologies we will also be forming new modes of travel to our goals, and perhaps even wholly new goals as a result.

Technologies Available Today

Today we encounter a confluence of technologies that are merging with computerized learning in our schools. The research data are beginning to show their impact on learning and creativity, but beyond that, we can see the excitement generated and hear the comments of gifted children and teachers regarding these technologies. But how do the gifted use emerging technologies?

(Continued on page 8)

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TECHNOLOGY AND EDUCATION

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Challenging the Gifted with Computer Software

Gregory C. Pattridge, Ph.D.

Parents of gifted students often ask me what they can do to challenge their child beyond what the school is capable of doing. My response to them is to dust off the home computer and begin assembling a library of software that the whole family can enjoy. Unfortunately, deciding which titles to purchase can be an overwhelming and frustrating experience.

There are more than 14,000 educational software titles available for today's home computer. The majority of them are not worthwhile endeavors. In 1986, I began to develop criteria to help me sift through and find the best titles to recommend for gifted students and their families. The criteria I chose focus primarily on the needs of the gifted student, but the end result is a list of software in which all ability ranges could meet with success. I initially tried to find software that had elements of each criterion. Since my resulting list was so small, I settled on software that included three out of the five criteria.

(Continued on page 12)



FROM THE EDITOR

Hello there, all you computer fans! This issue is designed just for you. Our future is being shaped by technology, and education is "getting with the program." The wonderful articles by students which appeared in our last issue could not have been written without the aid of computers. The girls from Rochester, Dana Fox and Shana Katzel, who designed their own research study on the self-concept of middle school students, had participated in a gifted program that made use of online data bases to teach the students research techniques. This was a community effort which involved families working together to help their children pursue their own research questions. The results are at a remarkable level of sophistication. (*You must read our last issue!*) The other lead article on the peer support group for underachievers was written primarily by a student for whom reading has been problematic. Thankfully, because of computers, his writing has not been imperiled by this weakness. The boys mentioned in their article that some of their "underachieving" friends who were failing basic math and science in school were developing sophisticated computer programs at home. This highlights the importance of computers in students' daily lives.

Technology enables children with learning disabilities and underachievers to be successful, and it enables achievers to learn advanced skills that are truly higher level proficiencies. It means some adjustments to the traditional ways in which we have taught children, but it also means valuing spatial learners to a greater extent than we have ever done in the past. (*These are the kids who say to the teacher as she struggles to program the computer, "Ms. K, all you need to do is hit these 2 keys," and the puzzled teacher wonders how the child knows this when the "user friendly" manual never mentioned it?" Ms. K doesn't realize that these children live inside the computer—they see all the components as if on a mobile and can easily construct relationships among them.*)

This issue contains a wonderful article on "emerging technologies" by Jan France, a fabulous guide to selecting software, by Greg Patridge, some exemplary computer projects in Karen Nelson's column, and don't miss Jim Delisle's rebuttal to all of this: "Low Tech and Proud of it!" (*Thanks, Jim, for helping us keep all of this in perspective.*)

At Open Space, we're moving toward "high tech" and proud of it. We're happy to have you as subscribers. Please call soon and let us know topics you'd like to see addressed and other ways we can serve you.

Linda Silverman

Understanding Our Gifted

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Publisher

Dorothy Knopper

Editor

Dr. Linda Kreger Silverman

Cartoonist

Linda Leviton

Column Editors

Lisa Ferguson, *Parent, Haverhill, Massachusetts*

Dorothy Knopper, *Private Consultant for the Gifted, Boulder, Colorado*

Dr. Deirdre Lovecky, *Clinical Psychologist, Providence, RI*

Dr. Suzanne Perry, *Principal, Aurora Public Schools, Aurora, Colorado*

Dr. Karen C. Nelson, *Emporia State University, Emporia, Kansas*

Stephanie Tolan, *Author and Consultant, Columbus, Ohio*

Advisory Board and Regular Contributors

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Column Editor

Dr. Jerry Flack, *University of Colorado, Colorado Springs, Colorado*
Column Editor

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Column Editor

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Column Editor

Dr. Joyce VanTassel-Baska, *College of William and Mary, Williamsburg, Virginia*

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PALEIDOSCOPE

Low Tech—And Proud of it!

The computer age has ushered in a new era of jargon as IBM, PC and CD-ROM have become the ABCs of the next generation. Virtually every school now has computers, every supermarket electronic scanners, and every dashboard digital readouts. From morning to night, cradle to grave, technology has become commonplace.

But for someone like me, who *still* feels it is a little scary that I can preset my morning coffee brewer the evening before, electronic gimmickry and gadgets hold little importance, and even less appeal. I prefer simpler times, when "hardware" involved hammers and nails; when "floppy disks" implied lower back pain; and when "memory" meant happy recollections of bygone times rather than the storage capacity of some distant mainframe.

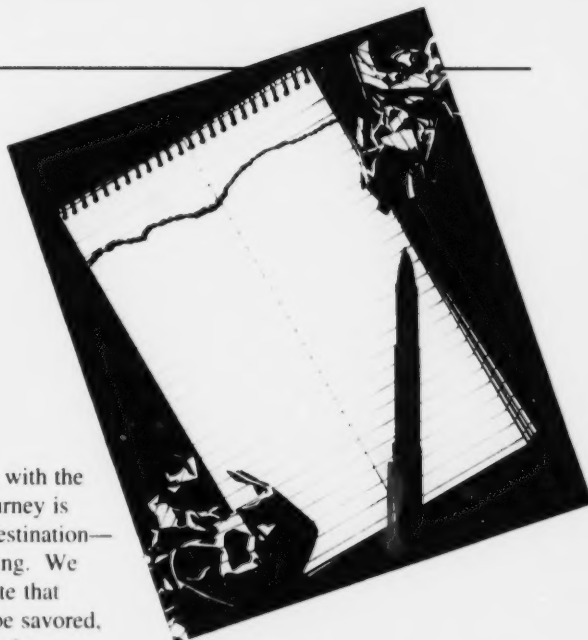
The human element, that sense of control over my environment, is the primary reason that when I write, I reach for a Bic, not a Mac. My colleagues (*the technologically literate ones*) scoff at my unwillingness to compose at a terminal or with a laptop. "You'd be so much more productive," they say, implying that by choosing a computer over pen and paper, my efficiency would increase and my output would double.

Efficiency... Output.... two words I believe our world would be better off if used less often. For when they become the ultimate goals of our

efforts, we have lost touch with the fact that, generally, the journey is more important than the destination—in writing as well as in living. We must take time to appreciate that some things are meant to be savored, not hurried; and that page after crumpled page of scattered first drafts give visible evidence that a wannabe writer is trying. With technology, we lose some of these pauses. Initial attempts can be bleeped out of existence with the push of a button—irretrievable, except in the mind—invisible to all but one's inner eye.

So I prefer low-tech. An IBM Selectric typewriter, with a built-in correction key, makes me feel more secure than a computer that might erase my entire essay with one power surge or a single bolt of lightning. A \$2.49 sticker on a jar of Jif is more comforting to me than a barcode that is decipherable only to an electronic reader. And 8 1/2" x 11" legal pads, which I am using right now to write this column (*it only seems appropriate that nothing electrical was used to compose it*), allow me to scan all I've written merely by flipping a page, not a switch.

I want my son and my students to be technologically astute. But even more, I want to teach them that it is still OK to bypass electronic wonders in search of slower, more comfortable alternatives. I'll remind them that Shakespeare did fine with pen in hand, and would probably have been stymied by Spellcheck. I'll remind



them that Georgia O'Keeffe painted from her soul, without benefit of MacPaint or a CAD lab. I'll remind them that Albert Einstein's life and work pre-dated the crudest office computers. More than anything, I want to leave the people I teach with the attitude that *technology is our servant, not our master*, unless we relinquish that one set of abilities we have over machinery: the talent to think, to judge, to feel.

The next generation will take for granted many of the devices that, today, we call "marvels." So be it; historically this has always occurred. But as we enter these next phases of technological development, let us take time to remind ourselves and our children that the most powerful instruments of all—**the human mind and the human heart**—require neither battery packs nor software to operate.

Thankfully, they never will.

Jim Delisle, Ph.D., currently on leave from Kent State University, is a 4th grade teacher in Solon, Ohio. He is President of The Association for the Gifted (TAG) and the author of five books (all written in longhand), including *Kidstories: Biographies of 20 Young People You'd Like to Know* (Free Spirit, 1991).

THE HIDDEN GIFTED LEARNER

Social Learning Disability

Heloise is talented at languages, music, and literature. Unfortunately, though her work in advanced French and music is outstanding for 5th grade, she forgets details of when assignments are due, forgets to bring them to class or turn them in, and is messy and disorganized. Her major problem, however, is social; she tends to annoy and irritate peers and adults. Heloise has a type of nonverbal learning disability.

In addition to the more academic difficulties explored in last month's column, gifted children with nonverbal learning disabilities have trouble understanding social cues, recognizing social context, monitoring their own behavior, and recognizing the subtleties of proper timing and spacing. In fact, they do not read facial expressions well, and ignore body language. They feel constantly surprised by the reactions they get from others because they have not read the cues that said "stop."

Children with social learning disabilities tend to be rather literal about content. They do not always understand kidding or joking. Many tend to be socially naive and rather immature. Some still engage in personally negative behaviors that others have outgrown long ago, such as making bathroom jokes, and they do not see the impact of these behaviors on others.

Since many are unaware of social custom about space between people, they tend to overstep spatial boundaries. The real problem is that they underestimate their own size and cannot judge if a space is big enough. Thus, they squeeze between others,

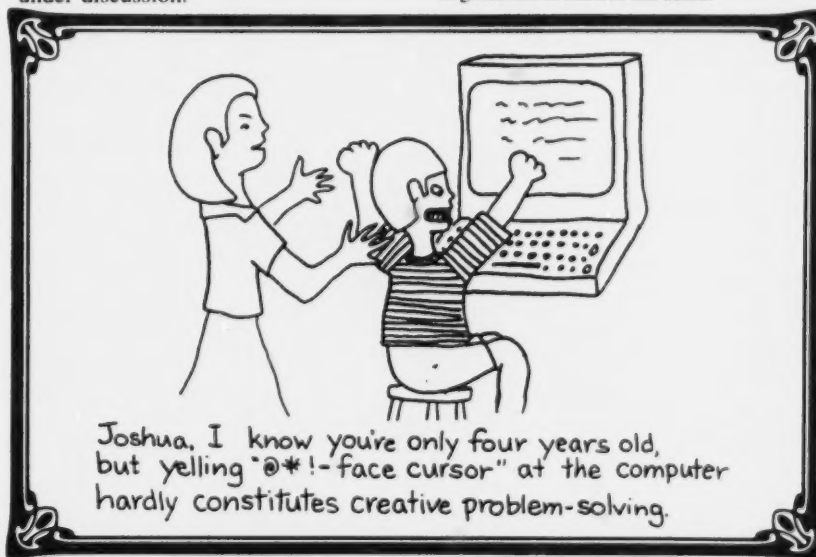
stand too close or take up too much space themselves. Because they also have trouble knowing where they are in space, they tend to ignore their own bodies and so are clumsy, bang into others, and step on toes.

Because they don't understand time and place in either a literal or figurative sense, they have trouble with social sequences. Thus conversations are a source of difficulty. Many are unaware of the social significance of a conversation, thinking the only purpose in talking is to impart information. Some have a constant supply of information to convey, but no listening skills. The appropriateness of the topic is an issue for youngsters who have little conception of timing. Also many do not have good conversational skills; for example, they do not know how to interrupt, change the topic, join a conversation, engage in repartee, or even make a comment on a topic under discussion.

Because of the difficulty these children have with organization and planning, they do not cue into what is going on around them until it is too late. They may not see that what they are doing will result in a negative consequence. In fact, they appear to be quite self-centered and not very empathic though this is often a cover for feelings of vulnerability. If they feel safe enough, and experience some control over their behavior, empathy and compassion often emerge spontaneously.

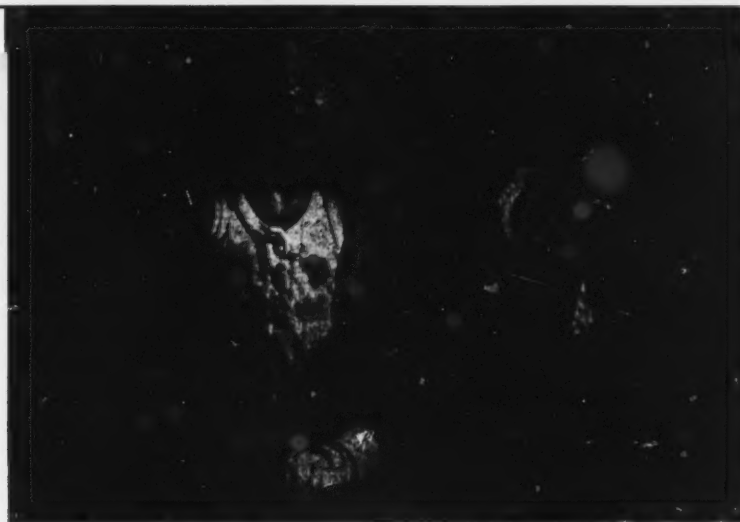
Nonverbal learning disability is a real learning disability and needs proper remediation. Unfortunately it is the learning disability most likely to be overlooked. Maturation does help, but the problems associated with nonverbal learning disabilities will not get better on their own since they are based on underlying visual and spatial weaknesses that are likely to continue. Helping the child learn to compensate can be beneficial by using areas of strength, and teaching specific strategies to overcome some areas of difficulty, for example, poor conversational skills and poor social awareness.

Deirdre V. Lovecky, Ph.D., is a licensed clinical psychologist in private practice in Providence, RI, and a frequent author of articles on giftedness in children and adults.



PARENTING

Lisa at Three



Today I would like to tell you a little more about Lisa, the little girl whose first days of life I described in my first column. Since then I have thought much about her and by now I have become attached to her since she represents so many of the gifted children I know. So she has become important to me as if she were a real person.

I want Lisa's parents and teachers to really understand how special and different she is. She is such a **BIG** personality to watch in a little growing body. She takes in everything that comes her way and tries to interpret it, understand it, change it and use it to include in the puzzle of life she is putting together.

Now three years old, it is clear that Lisa is an extraverted gifted child. She has learned to talk fluently, she never stops asking questions and she rarely leaves the side of the adults around her. They are clearly her resource for fulfilling her need to learn and understand. She never forgets anything. She wants to know what happens to the sugar when you put it in the tea: "I can't see it any more or get it on the spoon!" "Mummy, if you and Daddy are grown ups, am I a grown down?"

Lisa is easily frustrated, especially if her little fingers cannot do what she wants them to do. She does not particularly like to draw because she can never make the picture look like the dog she wants to draw. She soon gives up, so her Nursery School teacher might consider her drawings "immature."

She loves to dance and sing and run; in fact, Lisa is in perpetual motion! Her parents are very tired by the end of the day when Lisa is still wide awake and raring to go. She begins to challenge their authority and argues, most logically, why she should not go to bed. Indeed, she needs little sleep, but her parents need their evenings alone. Here we come across one of the many situations in which the needs of the parents and the gifted child are in conflict.

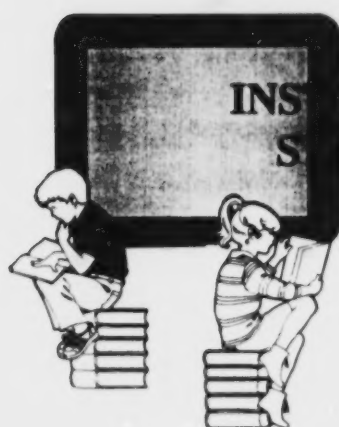
And now you would like to hear my advice. At this point, I would like to say that I believe that there are **no recipes** in education or psychology for handling specific situations. Even though this particular conflict exists in many families with gifted children, the dynamics in each are so different that a suggested solution will not fit all families. Therefore, I would only like to remind you that **both needs**

are legitimate, that there is no bad will on either side. It is important to keep communication open.

I will suggest, however, that you find a bedtime which comes closest to meeting everyone's needs. Share the problem openly and respectfully with your child and figure out a solution together. It may never be easy. Such opposing needs are often at the bottom of conflicts which arise between parents and their young gifted child. But opportunities to recognize and respect everyone's needs serve a young child much better in the long run than learning only to "obey the rules" of their elders.

I will continue to discuss typical conflicts between gifted children and their parents in future columns, as well as describe different types of gifted children. Please feel free to write with specific questions I can address in this column.

Dr. Annemarie Roeper is a consultant on the gifted in Oakland, CA and author of the book, *Educating Children for Life*. Co-founder of the Roeper City and Country School and the *Roeper Review*, Annemarie has inspired a worldwide focus on global awareness in gifted education.



INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES

Karen C. Nelson

Technology and Gifted Students: Two Vignettes

For all gifted students, computer literacy is as basic a skill as reading, writing and arithmetic. For geographically isolated students, the personal computer offers opportunities for acceleration and enrichment of curriculum not otherwise available in the small school district or rural community. The PC is without peer as a tool for research; even elementary students can learn to use software analyzing raw data for original projects in science and social studies (Nelson, 1991). For specific applications consider the following:

Software Service Project

An elementary school in Leavenworth, Kansas, acquired a batch of "free-ware"—public-domain software often obtainable for the price of the disks they're on. The problems were: the software was not documented with instructions on how to use or indexed by age level, curricular content, etc. Teachers couldn't use it without spending considerable time going through it.

G/T teacher Sally Clark's IDEA classes came to the rescue with a plan to sort and evaluate the programs. A simple rating sheet was developed.

Gifted students previewed each piece of software, indexing it by disk number, name, subject area and grade level range.

Students exercised critical thinking skills as they rated each piece of software on a scale of 1 - 5, using the following five criteria: **educational value, fun, good directions, graphics and eye-hand coordination.** Each piece of software was also given an overall rating and reviewers provided comments. Highest ratings went to programs like *Driver* ("very, very, very, very fun"), *Connection* ("cool, totally awesome"), and *Nations and Capitals* ("goes on forever"). Titles with lower ratings earned comments like "nothing to do," "some puzzles are made wrong," "very slow," or "confusing" (Clark, 1990; Nelson, 1991).

The Scarlet Letter Multimedia Project

In a Patchogue, New York English classroom multimedia technology helped break the cycle of failure for 23 underachieving gifted eleventh graders. Using *The Scarlet Letter* as the core project of the year and LinkWay as a multimedia tool, each student was assigned to interpret the dominant symbols in one chapter of the novel using graphics, audio and text. Students learned to use the buttons feature to group, web and connect information in intricate, non-linear ways, weaving symbols together to highlight special features and connections. For students

involved in the project, attendance was improved; all but one successfully completed the course and none dropped out of school (McDermott & Combs, 1991).

The Scarlet Letter Project demonstrates the ways in which computers can refocus curriculum... Typically, a work of literature is read in common, class discussion follows and a paper is assigned. The students (in the project) were clearly bored by this formula...

Over the years, these students slid by in school on the basis of their native ability and their verbal skills. They lacked the basic skills of written communication. Technology helped them to overcome these deficiencies. (p. 25)

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Karen C. Nelson, Ph.D., is Coordinator of the graduate program in gifted education at Emporia State University in Kansas. She has been a public school teacher, curriculum editor, writer and poet.

THE READING ROOM

Welcome back! This visit we continue our discussion of science fiction with "The Justice Cycle," three books by Virginia Hamilton. The first of the three is *Justice and Her Brothers*, in which we are introduced to the Douglass family, 11 year old Justice, her 13 year old twin brothers, Levi and Thomas, and their new neighbors, Mrs. Jefferson and her son, Dorian.

This first book can be read as a realistic, contemporary novel with little more than a hint of difference; it is here that the children, like the "new people" in John Wyndham's *The Chrysalids*, (See my column in last issue) discover and begin to comprehend their newness. For they are mutations, bringing new mental powers of telepathy, telekinesis, clairvoyance (and something else, "The Watcher," a being of power that dwells only in Justice), into the endangered human species. They are aided by Mrs. Jefferson, "the Sensitive," who perceives their gifts and helps them learn to use them.

In *Justice and Her Brothers* the emphasis is primarily on the children's "normal" life in southern Ohio, and on The Great Snake Race, an activity dreamed up by Thomas, the mean, angry twin who has always used his powers to control and tease the gentler, weaker Levi. Justice, the younger sibling, hopes to win the race, or at least hold her own and show Thomas that she can compete with the boys. But by the end the story has taken a strange turning, and Justice has visited the future through the powers of her mind and, with the strength of the Watcher, has joined with Thomas, Levi and Dorian to

create "the first unit," and to show them the future and their destiny.

The second book of the cycle, *Dustland*, is far more clearly science fiction than the first. It takes the first unit into the future. The four children, sitting with their hands joined and their backs against a buckeye tree, leave their bodies behind and "mind jump" into a twilight world deep in dust, peopled by the remnants of humanity and strange, mutant creatures, struggling to survive. In the future Thomas' anger and bitterness, his need for individual control remains and he wrenches himself away from the others. His defection threatens the unit's survival; only when joined can they return to the present. The unit requires the gifts of each member. *Dustland* is mostly a story of the other children's search for Thomas through a treacherous world they cannot fully comprehend.

The third book, *The Gathering*, is the most difficult of the three. It takes the reader and the children not only into *Dustland*, the same place as the Ohio in which they left their bodies, but a different time (after manmade and natural disasters have all but destroyed the planet and its life forms), but also into a realm of ideas so complex

that some will, no doubt, drop out, exhausted by the attention and mental energy it takes to follow Hamilton's many-layered story. For those who persist, the completed story of the first unit is one so rich in theme and concept, so relevant to giftedness, that discussions could continue almost indefinitely.

In Hamilton's own words, two important questions dealt with in these books are, "Is it possible that telepathy, prophesy and genius are genetic mutations? Could the striking talents of the few be the means of survival for the many?" Thomas does not want to relinquish self, competitiveness, ownership of his power and control over others; for his own, the unit's and humanity's survival his need for separateness must be overcome. Hamilton's theme, like Wyndham's, is that individual gifts are essential, not to benefit those who possess them, but to join with other gifts to benefit the species. As Justice knows, "Everything over there (the future) is...a joining; there is no other way to survive."

Stephanie Tolan, from Columbus, Ohio, is a noted author of children's books and one of the authors of the award-winning book, *Guiding the Gifted Child*.



Multimedia-type Programs on Existing Machines

Many of the new technologies do not require the addition of expensive hardware to existing machines. For instance, students can use the computers already in their homes or schools to create hypermedia presentations and reports. Joshua, age 13, a profoundly gifted youngster, has been using a programming language called *HyperTalk*, built into *Hypercard*. (*Hypercard is the basis for myriads of multimedia programs on the Macintosh and Apple IIGS computers.*) Joshua creates "stacks" that will control his computer, telling it to start up other programs. He also has produced an "electronic brochure" for another piece of math software he has written. Users can see what the final product looks like, try out a few of its features, and decide whether they want to purchase his product. The ease of learning the programming language has made hypermedia a powerful tool for Joshua to accomplish his goals.

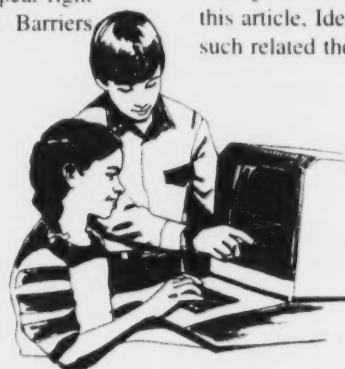
Tyler, a high-school junior, has created a hypermedia program to accompany his school district's curriculum in astronomy. It has elegant graphics, sounds, and text items that explain concepts about the universe. Using the mouse attached to the computer, students can "click" on an area of the computer screen containing a binary star, for instance, and Tyler's program will automatically move to more information about binary stars. Animations show how the two stars in the system move around each other. Tyler says,

"The main thing I enjoy about hypermedia is that you can fully customize it to your needs and you can build visually pleasing presentations that can be presented to all people. In my astronomy stack, I really enjoyed manipulating the data and the graphics to make it look profes-

sional and worthy of a commercial product."

It is this aesthetic sense of many gifted students, particularly attuned to the visual appeal of a presentation, that makes them find multimedia appealing.

New methods are being developed of making video clips appear right on the monitor screen. Barriers to overcome for both video and its accompanying sound were mainly the size of the files and the expense of the large storage devices to keep the clips. Now, though, software developers have been able to devise methods to compress the video and audio, as well as synchronize the two. The result will be an explosion of sensory-appealing, full motion color and sound in our near future. Bob Densmore, a teacher and technology advisor for his school district in Rutland, Vermont, says the students there will be capturing video footage of actual whale watches. Then the clips will be saved on a disk and given to other students to use on their computers. This way they will be able *"to take pieces and bring them in and set up presentations, to explain what they saw and learned, and share with other kids in the future that want to go out on whale watches. This means that kids will be explaining to other kids the things that they should know."* The interdisciplinary aspects of such a project are particularly suited to many gifted curriculum models.



New Generations of Software

We are also seeing existing computers wholly transformed by innovations in software. Artificial intelligence, built into a program, lets the

computer "learn" a user's preferences in writing styles, thought processes, and even games like chess. For instance, *IdeaFisher*, a creativity tool, helps in the brainstorming process. The student starts out by typing in a key word and from there, the program helps her to draw new cognitive associations. Using the theme of "navigate" from the initial quote in this article, *IdeaFisher* brought up such related themes as maps, nautical chart, examples of boats (*dinghy, dugout canoe, gondola, kayak, Viking ship, whaleboat*), people (*Leif Eriksson, circumnavigator, copilot, radar operator, captain, cartographer*),

exploration, space, abstractions (*caution, courage, safety*), motion (*shoot the rapids, whirl, collide, chase, swerve*) sports, winds (*breeze, gale-force winds, gust, headwind, monsoon, north wind, prevailing, trade wind*) and more. The program lets the student decide in what direction she would like to go, and then continues suggesting associations, which she can copy to a "notepad" on the screen. In so doing, it encourages her to learn the process of free association, and to find new pathways to linking ideas. Furthermore, any associations that she makes in her own mind can then be entered into the program, so that it will remember them the next time and link them to its already existing database of terms.

Simulations are another category of software innovations. Students, using software called *SimCity*, are able to model on-screen representations of imaginary and real cities. Concepts that they learn while playing the simulation include managing the budget of a municipality, building mass transportation, optimizing traffic flow, keeping the citizens

(Continued on page 9)

happy, controlling the birth rate, setting up a power grid, minimizing pollution, offering police and fire services, determining land values,

zoning regions, disaster planning and recovery, building recreational areas, and manipulating virtually every aspect of the development and growth of a city.

They must weigh consequences in their minds before making decisions that will affect other aspects of the city. For example, if they let the transportation budget dip too low, roads will begin deteriorating, and then people will be unable to reach their jobs (*vehicles in traffic jams appear right on the computer screen*). Housing occupancy will fall in areas where mass transportation is insufficient (*again, this is visibly evidenced by houses, apartments, and other buildings typically found in a residential zone disappearing right before their eyes*). The tax base will plummet as a further result. Costly repairs to the roads and to the city's well-being could have been avoided in the first place by managing the transportation budget better. All of these variables are simulated with visual images and sounds in a representation of the city, giving a taste of reality to the game. About simulation technology, Josh says, "*Its attraction is the opportunity to use machines I will probably never even see. With the current technology, you can achieve an extremely high factor of realism with a modestly equipped computer, which increases its attractiveness greatly.*"

Yet another innovation for existing machines comes as a result of research into how human beings interact with computers. The "human interface" is now more intuitive to the user, and as a result, makes our computers easier to navigate. We will continue to see additions and

improvements to the human interface. One of the most exciting of these is voice recognition technology, with which the computer learns spoken

commands and then performs jobs without requiring use of the keyboard. For the disabled and young learners, this technology holds particular promise.

'I really enjoyed manipulating the data and the graphics to make it look professional and worthy of a commercial product.'

Hardware Additions

◆ Modems

A computer modem is one of the most cost-effective hardware peripherals that one can add to a system, since it opens up the world of telecommunications. With a modem, a person can type messages to other people in distant places. Rachel, 14, likes to use the modem at home. She particularly appreciates the fact that when she is corresponding with others, they cannot prejudice her when she is using a "handle" (much like on the CB radio). She says, "*It's so neat that somebody never even knows your name, but they get to know your personality. They can't judge you by what they see, because they never see you. You can be the person you really want to be on the computer. That's why I like handles instead of using your own name.*"

Rachel's mother teaches telecommunications at an orthodox Jewish yeshiva school. Her students have been able to share aspects of their tightly-knit culture and unique upbringing with other classrooms across the nation. One girl wrote an essay titled "*My Grandmother Cooks Up Traditions*"—all about the wonderful Jewish foods her grandmother cooks for various holidays during the year—and shared it online. In turn, the yeshiva students are able to learn from their electronic peers

about other customs and cultures within our diverse nation and the world.

Projects like the Florida Department of Education's TOGL (*Telecommunications Opportunities for Gifted Learners*) have linked rural students and teachers together by modem with each other and guest experts. Students interview the guests, who have included computer experts, scientists, educators, politicians, and even the author, Piers Anthony. Teachers can exchange curriculum ideas, as well as carry out those ideas online (*for instance, classes have surveyed other classes, analyzed the results, and then reported the results online*). Online research through the DIALOG Classmate set of databases enables the TOGL students and teachers to access information not available in small or nonexistent rural libraries. Additionally, TOGL has linked up with an international project called KIDS '91 (and now KIDS '92), in which participants answered four fundamental questions:

1. Who am I?
2. What do I want to be when I grow up?
3. What do I want the world to be like when I grow up?
4. What can I do now to make that happen?

The answers were a study themselves in cultural contrasts and similarities, since students from all over the world shared their visions.

◆ Scanners

For incorporating images into presentations and documents, a scanner is an invaluable tool. Now there are a variety of models, some of which scan color photographs at extremely high resolution, and handheld versions which are portable and inexpensive. Duncan Teague, a teacher and director of the plan-

(Continued on page 10)

etarium at Craigmont High School in Memphis, Tennessee, says they use their scanner for several purposes. The students put out an astronomy newsletter, using clip art that they have scanned in from photographs (such as NASA releases). They also scan in the text of other planetariums' scripts for their shows, then modify the scripts to fit the format they use at Craigmont. For this purpose, the scanner turns into an OCR (optical character recognition) device, and saves them the trouble of having to retype a script.

◆ CD-ROM

CD-ROM (compact disc-read only memory) is a technology that has facilitated the storage of large files. Students and teachers can polish their foreign language skills, for instance, using the *HyperGlot* series of CD-ROM courses. Traditionally, the complete study of a foreign language has required the presence of a teacher or the real-life experience of living with speakers of that language. With the *Hyperglot* courses, students can work at their own pace and study independently, because the computer instructs them in pronunciation, vocabulary, and syntax. If the computer has a microphone attached, students can even speak into it, and compare the sound of their own phrases with that of the "teacher" in the software. CD-ROM is an ideal medium for the storage of typically large sound clips, because each disc can hold tremendous amounts of data. With headphones attached to the CD-ROM player, the listener hears high-quality sound during the completely interactive session. Students can focus on areas in which they want to develop and reinforce their skills, rather than listening to a non-interactive videotape or audiocassette that would enable them only to follow a prescribed course of study.

◆ Laser Videodiscs

A laser videodisc player, hooked up to a television and computer, together

comprise a multimedia system with extraordinary interactive power. Using a computer-driven laser videodisc player, a teacher or students can quickly control the video sequences displayed, just by clicking an icon on the computer screen (no rewinding of the videodisc is necessary, since the laser "seeks" the appropriate starting frame in a matter of instants). *Animal PathFinders*, one of the *Interactive Nova* series, has actual video footage from the highly acclaimed PBS documentaries. Additionally, students can view linked slides having to do with animal migration, habitats, and behaviors.

If the students wanted to learn more about bees, for instance, they would click on the iconic image of a honeybee on screen. Then they could learn about how the bees perform different types of dances to communicate with the other bees in the hives. By clicking on the graphic of the TV, a message is sent to the laser videodisc player. It rapidly finds the place on the disc containing video footage of a honeybee performing the dances and sounds that communicate the location, quality, and quantity of nectar. The student can go back and forth between the computer and TV, reading about the significance of the dances, then

seeing and hearing the bee in action. Narration on the videodisc also describes more about scientists' knowledge of honeybee communication. The computer screen's information can be "dumped" to a printer so that students can view the text and graphics later. Additionally, they can participate in a game called "*You Be the Bee*," and determine where a nectar supply is in relation to the location of the hive (graphics on screen show the sun, different flower

patches, the hive, and even the angles which determine the type of bee dance).

Then the student becomes a bee, first seeing the hivemate dance on the TV screen, and then figuring out which of the bushes has the nectar supply and "flying" to it to see if he is right. So many senses are involved in the game that children with all types of learning styles can participate in the learning process. As a further, open-ended activity, students can create their own presentations, choosing which video clips to include, and writing their own accompanying documentary text. Perhaps one day a gifted person will invent a "virtual reality" machine which will even inundate the classroom with the aroma of the particular flower, much as the real bee carries back that aroma to the hive!

◆ Satellite hook-ups

DeSoto Trail Elementary in Tallahassee, Florida, is a state-of-the-art school with many of the aforementioned technologies already in place. Additionally, the staff wrote a proposal and received a grant for a

satellite dish and other equipment. The satellite dish carries specialized programs like those on NASA's Select channel. Cookie Zimmer, an award-winning fourth grade teacher, used the channel with her

students, watching astronauts giving a lesson in space. Later, the class used a laser videodisc to learn about light, then did small group research on the subject, and wrote a multimedia show about what they had learned. They also published a colorful booklet about their research, which, says Mrs. Zimmer, "gets them so much more excited about their learning because they see their product and it looks so professional."

"You can be the person you really want to be on the computer."

(Continued on page 11)

In rural areas and small schools, there are often not enough students in a specialized class to justify hiring a teacher for that subject. Several projects now exist to network and serve those students with satellite broadcasts of courses. Students stay in contact with the remote teacher by telephone and computer link, so they can ask questions and transmit coursework.

Supercomputers

The Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory's National Energy Research Supercomputer Center (NERSC) offers summer supercomputing workshops for teachers and high school students. The governor of each state can nominate one outstanding student to attend and learn about the capacities and operation of a supercomputer. After the students attend the two-week experience at the California site, they return to their home state with a password enabling them to use the supercomputer for their own interests in science, mathematics, and computers. Through the marvels of modern networking, they can transmit their data to the supercomputer, which further analyzes the information or performs specialized three-dimensional visualization techniques. They also stay in touch with each other on the NEBBS (*the National Education Bulletin Board System*).

Ellie, a high school senior in Kingston, Rhode Island, attended the supercomputing workshop. After learning about how to send electronic mail on the system, and how to use the three main programs on which the workshop focused (*a climate simulation, a particle simulation, and a ray-tracing/3-dimensional modeling program*), the students worked on group projects for the remaining two days. Ellie's group made an animated commercial using the ray-tracing program. Another group simulated the "Nemesis Project," or what would happen if a large object one-fourth the size of the sun were to enter the solar system. Several groups did particle physics predictions. Ellie now says, "Aside from

being exposed to lots of technologies, the main thing I gained was being with the other kids." Being able to work in a synergistic relationship with other outstanding students was definitely a highlight of the program.

THE FUTURE OF EDUCATIONAL TECHNOLOGY

We've seen a glimpse of the future even in the technologies of today. Continuing advances occur at breakneck speed in virtually every area of computing technology: **miniaturization, transmission of data, networking, virtual reality, animation speed, graphic resolution, storage of files, portability, affordability, artificial intelligence, the human interface, hypermedia, display screens, sound recording, file compression and decompression, voice recognition, and optical character recognition.** The effects on learning and

creativity will be dependent on how well we integrate the technology into our homes, workplaces, and schools. Tom Plati, Coordinator of Educational Technologies for the Shrewsbury Public Schools in Massachusetts, says that already it's not hard to teach the use of the equipment: his school district is using many of the emerging technologies. His hope, though, is that they will become more transparent, and that one day *"the computer will be thought of as no different than any other tool. You should trip over it like a wastebasket."*

With "the wind and the waves" of technology on our side, may we become the able navigators of new frontiers. Perhaps in the future, the computer will even help us to avoid tripping over that wastebasket.

Jan K. France is an educational computing consultant based in Germantown, Tennessee. She served as a consultant for the TOGL project, and researched much of this article via the medium of computer telecommunications.

BACK ISSUES ARE AVAILABLE

- | | |
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Emerging Technology Terms

Jan K. France

animations—moving graphics that work like flipping the pages in a flip-book; a series of frames, which, when rapidly displayed, give the illusion of movement

artificial intelligence—the field in which computers are taught to "learn," much as human beings interpret information, learn strategies, compare and contrast, make decisions, and theorize

BBS—bulletin board system, an electronic information center with many users leaving messages and files for others

CD-ROM—compact disc, read-only memory, a technology enabling hundreds of megabytes of data to be stored on a single disk; a laser in the CD-ROM reader finds the information encoded on the disk; a modification called CD-I (compact disc interactive) allows even more interactivity and control of the information on the disk

compression—the process of making a computer file smaller, while still maintaining the integrity of the file, and the possibility of later decompressing it in its entirety

electronic mail—messages sent via phone lines or a network to a host computer, enabling users to leave information for later retrieval by another person

floppy disk—a portable, flexible form of magnetic media, containing computer data or files; sometimes covered with a hard plastic case

graphics—computer images or pictures

human interface—the way in which a human being interacts with a computer; the computer program's required method of performing its functions

hypermedia—media containing "links" to other contents; the user can control the level of detail being viewed

icon—a graphic image on screen that represents a process or link that the computer can perform

laser videodisc—a hard, encoded disk which can contain video footage, still slides, and sound; some models of laser videodisc players can be computer-controlled

modem—modulator/demodulator, a communication device which links computers via phone lines

mouse—a handheld pointing and clicking device for navigating through a computer program or operating system

multimedia—the use of more than one form of media to entertain or inform; graphics, sound, animation, and text may be combined in various forms, and with other devices attached to the computer

networking—linking computers through phone lines, cables, fiber-optics, or even radio waves

OCR—optical character recognition, a technology enabling computers to "read" printed text, usually via a scanner

online—used to describe the state of telecommunicating

pointing and clicking—usually done with a computer mouse or other pointing device (e.g., a touchscreen); a quick method of indicating a choice without having to use a keyboard

scanner—a device which will take noncomputer images and text and convert them to computer graphics and documents

simulation—a computerized model of a real-life situation

supercomputer—one of the fastest, most capable, and powerful computers known

telecommunications—long-distance communications; if done with computers, then better known as telecomputing

virtual reality—programs which give the user the feeling of being in a real-life situation, often complete with 3-dimensional graphics and stereo sound

(Continued from page 1)

CRITERIA FOR CHOOSING THE BEST EDUCATIONAL SOFTWARE TITLES

1. The Level is Wide Ranging

There is nothing worse than spending money on software only to find it has served its usefulness after a few months. I searched out software that had a minimum range of five years, preferably a broad enough range that would challenge both you and your child.

2. It Helps Teach Some Aspect of the Curriculum

I was amazed at how many pieces of software were purported to be of some educational value, but taught the user nothing connected with present day curriculum.

3. It Develops Higher Level Thinking Skills

Software should challenge the student and not just repeat some knowledge-based questions that could just as easily be dealt with in a textbook.

4. It Requires Outside Research/Decision Making

The software should excite the student to use the library, to dig and explore away from the computer terminal.

5. It Provides Extensive Feedback

A good teacher will always provide continuous verbal reinforcement for learning. The computer program should also provide the students with feedback to let the students know that they are on the right track and doing a good job.

(Continued on page 13)

THE BEST IN EDUCATIONAL SOFTWARE

The list contains 30 different titles that have been evaluated and deemed the best for home computer use. Finding these titles can sometimes be a challenge. If you cannot locate a particular title at your local software store, try special ordering it or go directly to the publishing company.

[KEY: APPLE-A
IBM-I
COMMODORE-C
TANDY-T]

SCIENCE

1. The Factory (SUNBURST) Grades 4th-Adult [A: I: C: T]

Using a simulated machine assembly line that you design, you can create geometric products from scratch. Find out what running your own factory will teach you about the everyday objects around you, what made them and how. Develops inductive thinking and visual discrimination skills.

2. The Incredible Laboratory (SUNBURST) Grades 3rd-Adult [A: C]

Given a list of "crazy chemicals," students create a monster by choosing items from the list and adding them to a beaker filled with a bubbling solution. Through trial and error you discover what each chemical will produce.

3. The Pond (SUNBURST) Grades 2nd-Adult [A: I: C: T]

Players identify a pattern of lily pads to help a frog navigate a pond. Teaches patterns, sequence, experimentation, and logic.

4. Rocky's Boots (LEARNING COMPANY) Grades 4th-Adult [A: I: C]

Players construct and play games with simulated machines made of wires and sensors. Teaches logic skills and basic computer circuitry.

5. Designasaurus (DESIGNWARE) Preschool-Adult [A: I: C]

Dinosaur enthusiasts will enjoy studying about the food, environment, and enemies of various dinosaurs. This program helps teach biology and ecology as it relates to prehistoric events.

6. Geoworld (TOM SNYDER PROD.) Grades 6th-Adult [A]

A simulation in geology where users learn about rocks, topography, natural resources, geography, and the mining process. Utilizes a huge database of the world's mineral resources.

READING/LANGUAGE ARTS

1. M-ss-ng Links (SUNBURST) Grades 3rd-Adult [A: I: C]

Students reconstruct passages from well-known children's literature by filling in missing letters to words. Provides practice in spelling, reading, and grammar.

2. Getting Ready to Read and Add (SUNBURST) Preschool [A: I: C]

Six learning games develop important skills: recognition, discrimination, matching, association, and counting. These skills are applied to letters, numbers, and shapes.

3. The Game Show (ADVANCED IDEAS) Grades 2nd-Adult [A: I: C]

Similar to the TV game show "Password," this 16-program disk features vocabulary quizzes in a variety of subject areas.

4. Memory Castle (SUNBURST) Grades 5th-Adult [A: I: C]

Discover the power of using memory strategies. Students build visual and auditory memory skills as they find their way through a castle. Three challenging skill levels are included.

5. The Grammar-Examiner (DESIGNWARE) Grades 5th-Adult [A: I: C]

Do you need some practice in sharpening those proof-reading skills? This program uses a game format to help you reach your ultimate goal to become the editor-in-chief of The Grammar-Examiner newspaper.

MATH

1. Teasers by Tobbs (SUNBURST) Grades 4th-Adult [A: C: T]

Students identify missing factors, products, addends, and sums on a puzzle grid. One to four may play at six levels of difficulties.

2. Bumble Games (LEARNING COMPANY) Preschool-4th grade [A: C]

Children learn fundamental math skills and create computer graphics with six easy-to-use games.

3. Bumble Plot (LEARNING COMPANY) Grades 2nd-8th [A: C]

An advanced version of Bumble Games, students create computer graphics by plotting positive and negative numbers.

4. Challenge Math (SUNBURST) Grades 1st-6th [A: I: C]

Four games require students to solve everyday problems using their knowledge of math. The games include Digitotaur, Alien Intruder, and Math Mansion. Quickly reinforces and enriches math knowledge.

5. Math Maze (DESIGNWARE) Grades 1st-6th [A: I: C]

Develop both quickness and test accuracy in the four basic math operations. Choose from 40 prepared mazes or make your own. Always seemed challenging and never boring.

6. Green Globes And Graphing Equations (SUNBURST) Grades 9th-Adult [A: I: C]

Contains two tool programs and two game programs. This is a good beginning piece of software for the

(Continued on page 14)

student interested in algebra and trigonometry.

SOCIAL STUDIES/GEOGRAPHY

1. Where in the World is Carmen San Diego? [A; C; I]

Where in the USA is Carmen San Diego? [A; C; I; T]

Where in Europe is Carmen San Diego? [A; C; I; T]

Where in Time is Carmen San Diego? [A; C; I; T]

(*BRODERBUND*) Grades 5th-Adult

Unravel the mystery of a crime and learn the culture and geography of different worldwide cities. Encourages and teaches research skills as over 1,000 clues are available to help you solve the crime.

2. Elementary Volume 6-Social Studies (MECC) Grades 3rd-8th [A]

Five simulations reinforce economics, history, and geography lessons. Includes the popular "Oregon Trail," which is also available separately.

3. Agent USA (SCHOLASTIC) Grades 3rd-Adult [A; I; C]

Relies on logical thinking and problem solving skills to teach geography and map reading in a game format. Great graphics and sound effects as you travel around the

country by train.

4. Audobon: Whales/Audobon: Grizzly Bears (ADVANCED IDEAS) Grades 3-Adult [A; I]

Through the use of interactive stories, you explore the habitat and ecosystem of these two animals. The goal of these programs is to design strategies to save and conserve animals using an ecological model.

5. Cross Country U.S.A. (DIDATECH) Grades 5th-Adult [A]

Learn about the United States as you truck across the country in this simulated program. Includes experiences with physical, economic, and political geography.

MISCELLANEOUS

1. Printshop (BRODERBUND) Grades 3rd-Adult [A; I; C]

Creativity can run wild as you create greeting cards, signs, banners, and stationery. You may use ready made graphics or design your own for use on the final product.

2. Gertrude's Secrets (LEARNING COMPANY) Preschool-4th Grade [A; I; C]

Students form color and shape patterns with puzzle pieces. Develops deductive reasoning and logical thinking.

3. Think Quick (LEARNING COMPANY) Grades 2-9 [A; I]

This release from Learning Company contains the best graphics of any of their programs. This motivating game helps improve problem solving and decision making skills while you run from cute little slime worms.

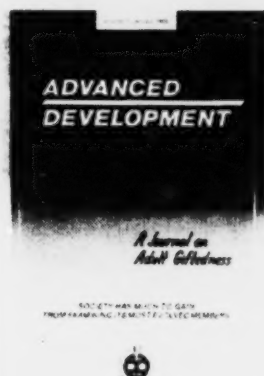
4. Go To The Head Of The Class (MEDIA MATERIALS) Grades 2nd-Adult [A]

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CONCLUSION

I am glad that I could do some of the footwork for you in determining what is best in the continuously expanding software market. The future looks ever so bright. The software and program technology that is becoming available for home computers is truly exciting. Recent advances with compact and video disk will certainly challenge students well into the 21st century. Until these advances become more affordable, be assured that the software titles presented here will be used and enjoyed for many years to come.

Gregory C. Pattridge, Ph.D. is a teacher for Jefferson County Public Schools in Golden, Colorado and a frequent consultant for gifted and computer education.



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THE HIGHLY GIFTED

A Quiet Crisis (Part I)

For highly gifted children and their advocates, that century-old piece of technology, the telephone, may be a more valuable friend than any modern invention. In virtually an instant, we can access peers for these children, networks of other families who are experiencing similar trials and joys as they live with extreme giftedness day in and day out, far-flung experts in every corner of the globe, and valuable educational resources.

The telephone also plays the role of a modern Paul Revere for highly gifted children, their families, and the professionals who care about them. Warnings come in many ways. For me, it was the fourth troubling phone call this week which finally prompted this particular column.

Phone call #1: A long-time, politically savvy state director of gifted education called to discuss several different issues. We concluded our conversation, and then, in a private moment, she stated simply and eloquently what seems so difficult to say in the midst of the current politically correct public discourse about school reform: *"If we claim our goal is to educate all children, we had better mean all children—not all children except the gifted."*

Phone call #2: A young mother of a 6-year-old above 180 IQ called, not to locate information or support for her child, but to share with me her own dream. She had become intrigued with the field of the psychology and education of the gifted, and had done a great deal of reading and research on her own. Now she finally had the time and money to return to school. She had explored educational opportunities in her own area

of the country, and had spoken with university professors, school district personnel, and other parents of gifted children. Their advice to her was nearly unanimous: *"Don't go into this field. You won't have a job when you're done. Generalize, don't specialize."* She called me to ask why I had persisted in specializing in this area if the prospects were indeed so bleak.

Phone call #3: A program coordinator in a well-regarded school district which has served gifted children using a comprehensive combination of service models called to say that this year, administrators have told her that she and her staff are to provide all services in the regular classroom instead, where "other students can benefit, too." She was particularly concerned about the highly gifted children in the district, knowing that their unique needs would not begin to be met this way.

Phone call #4: The mother of a highly gifted girl who does algebra in her head "for fun" and consistently scores four years above grade level on tests of mathematics achievement called to ask me how she could convince the classroom teacher and the gifted coordinator that her young daughter did not need to keep adding and subtracting one- and two-digit numbers with the rest of the third grade class.

Renzulli and Reis (1991) refer to a "quiet crisis" in gifted education, in their extensive and excellent article discussing the impact of the school reform movement. I believe we may have more than a "quiet crisis" on our hands; if those four telephone calls are in any way indicative of the frustration that hundreds of other parents, teachers, administrators, and

state directors are experiencing, it is only a matter of time before the unmet needs of the children (and adults) will make it a noisy crisis indeed.

In Langston Hughes's poem, *Harlem*, he asks, "What happens to a dream deferred? Does it dry up, like a raisin in the sun?...or does it explode?" (Hughes, 1974, p. 268). Highly intellectually gifted children are already at risk in many ways. They languish in schools which often do not begin to meet their needs. Their right to a free and appropriate public education is not guaranteed by law. Their families feel isolated. Little research exists about this population: "The higher the score used to define highly gifted, the sparser the literature base" (Delisle, 1992, p. 174). Current trends in school reform have led to the disbanding of honors classes, gifted education programs, and ability grouping, sometimes in the name of equity. Ironically, these trends leave brilliant children who live in poverty with even fewer opportunities to develop their talents than they had before; their families cannot afford the private schools and summer enrichment programs wealthier children have the option to attend.

I believe it is time to ask the question, "What is the responsibility of regular education?" I will attempt to answer this question in Part II of this column.

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Kathi Kearney is Founder of the Hollingworth Center for Highly Gifted Children in Auburn, Maine, and a doctoral candidate at Teachers College, Columbia University.

PERSONALITY PLUS

Technical Wizards

Some of the children we are least likely to understand, or deal with effectively in the schools, are those who are best suited to our technological future. These children are natural technical wizards. From the earliest moments of life, they are fascinated with mechanical objects and how things work. Several children who have come to the Gifted Child Development Center for testing are classic examples of this phenomenon.

M's first word at the age of 5 months was "fan," referring to the ceiling fan, which began his interest in electrical gadgets. For his third birthday, M wanted a ground fault interrupter (don't ask me what that means...). He made his first electromagnetic generator at the age of 4, and his first amplifier at the age of 5.

When he was tested at the age of 5, instead of drawing a person, M drew a diode circuit and a transformer with a built-in plug. In his Sentence Completion test, M said he thinks most about "electronic circuits," dreams of "electronic circuits," hates when his brother gets into his electronics and destroys them, is unhappy sometimes when his circuits don't work, that his mother and father help him with electronics, and when he gets older he's going to be "somebody who does a lot of electronics." Imagine being M's teacher and trying to teach him spelling!

Unless all the words had something to do with electronic circuitry, it is doubtful that you would hold M's interest or enthusiasm for very long.

Some parents have been rightfully concerned about the welfare of their technical wizards during early childhood. One mother wrote on her parent questionnaire:

At 2 years, 1 month, his favorite gift was a Mickey Mouse calculator. He'd sit for an hour or more pressing the buttons, adding and subtracting by one. By 2 1/2, he was counting to 100 forwards and from 100 to 0 backwards. Then he started counting by 10's. Clocks and gears entered our life around this time. He got clocks for gifts and we'd sit on the bed watching them. He wanted to know about gears and had to see the engine of the car. We'd be riding and he'd be listening for the gears operating. The summer when he was 2 1/2 we'd go to the amusement park, and the kids loved the rides but I was a nervous wreck. He would lean way over to see how the ride operated. On the merry-go-round his head was always up watching the poles to see how they operated or else he was leaning into the center of the ride to see the gears. On one of the little car rides, he started crawling under one of the cars.

We ran with the attendant and when we got there he looked up and asked, "What makes this thing run, anyway?"

How to cope with a technical wizard in the classroom or family? **Respect their passion** and give them as many opportunities as possible to learn what they want to learn. Don't try to round them out and expand their interests. Some schools are ideally suited for such "immersion learners," as Dee Lovecky and Stephanie Tolan call them. In these programs, the curriculum is designed around the child's interests: reading, spelling, creative writing, mathematics are all woven into the study of rockets or computers or mechanics. Computer-assisted instruction and interactive computers may be the most effective teaching tools for these naturally investigative minds. They respond better to machines than to people. We have to remember that not all children are "people persons"—some are much more comfortable in the world of objects. We need them to be who they are. They will become our technical leaders.

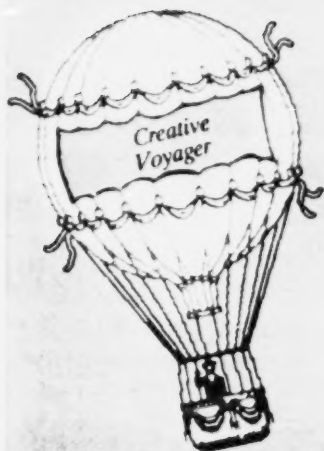
Linda Silverman, Ph.D., is a licensed psychologist and Director of the Gifted Child Development Center in Denver, Colorado.

Rock-a-by Data

*Rock-a-by data,
on a hard disk
Back your work up,
or run a great risk
If power should surge,
computer will fall
And down will come
hard disk,
data and all.*

Tom Mayer

IN SEARCH OF SERENDIPITY



Creative

Ventures

And

Encounters

Jerry Flack

Tour Guide

Olympics

On this journey we will be going to Greece, France, and Spain, and of course, to the most exciting nation on Earth, *Imagination*. Every four years, people all over the world celebrate their humanity and the union of body, mind, and spirit by staging the olympics. The olympics traces its origins back to battles waged by the mythological god, Zeus. Mortal Greeks began celebrating the olympics in 776 B.C. The modern olympics were first staged in 1896, in Athens, Greece. The modern olympics feature both winter and summer games, which will be held in, respectively, France and Spain in 1992. The coming year offers an exciting opportunity to channel students' energies into creative productive exercises and creative problem solving activities, both at home and in the school, which focus upon the olympics.

Create an olympics alphabet book. Research the history of both the modern and ancient games. Using the names of olympic sites, customs, events, and personalities, create an alphabet book that celebrates the olympics, A to Z.

Imagine that stop watches do not exist; no one ever invented one. How might olympic officials clock contestants in events found in alpine skiing and track and field? **Invent a new way to time sporting events.** Describe the invention and explain how it works. Draw a diagram of the invention.

Using personification, write about a dramatic event in olympic history from the point of view of a vital piece of sports equipment. For example, pretend to be the blades on the skates of Brian Boitano in the 1988 Calgary Winter Olympics. Describe the thrill and excitement of competition and victory.

Suggest whimsical and creative alternatives to some equipment utilized in olympic events. For example, what kitchen instruments might be substituted for track and field equipment? Could one substitute a paper plate for the discus, a broom for a javelin, or a scouring pad for the shot put? Stage a kitchen olympics for classroom or family fun. What other kinds of special olympic games could be held? The winter games using equipment from the school cafeteria?

Create a new honor or award that will be awarded at the 1992 Barcelona Olympics. Design a medal and tell why and how it will be awarded. Next, write a *Sports Illustrated* feature story about the first recipient of this honor. Perhaps an award should be given to the athlete who best promotes harmony among all the athletes from all the nations represented in the games, or perhaps the honor might go to the woman or man who exhibits the greatest degree of courage or sacrifice.

Sadly, some of the recent summer olympics games have been victimized by political boycotts and even

(Continued on page 18)

from
parent

to
parent

A Favor from a Friend

The most effective way to approach the challenge of dealing with a gifted or highly gifted child in school is for parents and teachers to think in terms of "asking a favor from a friend." I believe that parents and teachers need to use all the same kinds of "manners" and "social skills" that asking a favor would require.

A friend of mine made a mistake, I think, when she told the principal of her son's elementary school, "I'm not disappointed in this school—I didn't expect much."

Likewise, the child's teacher was wrong to suggest to his mother, "*He wouldn't be so bored in my class if you didn't do so much with him at*

home." These are not the sort of things one says to get on a person's good side, and increase the chances of a favorable response to a special request!

Teachers and administrators will simplify the job and increase their chances of success with the gifted children in their district if they will truly listen to parents. Parents need to know that you value their insights and do not consider them "pushy." In addition, teachers and administrators should remember that parents bear the ultimate responsibility for their child's education—a weighty load with a gifted or highly gifted child.

Public schools have the capacity and usually the resources to handle gifted kids if they keep in touch with parents, allow input from the children

themselves, consult the experts in the field, and stay flexible.

Parents must not forget that teachers and administrators are people too; they became educators because they care about children and understand the struggle to learn. Good teachers are overworked, underpaid and undervalued. Understand their constraints, and sympathize. Such empathy goes a long way toward a balanced approach to the issues you will encounter, and toward building a partnership with the schools. On the other hand, some compromises are not a wise choice. Keep in mind long term goals for your child such as confidence-building, diverse experiences, and opportunities for intellectual challenge. Remember that in the final analysis you are in charge of your child's educational program, and if approached with kindness and respect, your child's educators will usually assist you.

Parent to Parent is your forum for sharing ideas with other parents of gifted children. We want to hear your story—what has worked, or not worked, for your family. Please send your name, address, and phone number to Understanding Our Gifted, P.O. Box 18268, Boulder, CO 80308-8268, and we will contact you for details.

Lisa Ferguson is from Haverhill, Massachusetts and the parent of highly gifted children.

Creative Ventures (Continued)

terrorist activity. Such activities have kept young people from around the world from forging positive bonds and experiencing the brotherhood and sisterhood the modern olympics were designed to foster. In one tragic incident at the 1972 Munich Olympics, terrorists killed young Israeli athletes. Use the tool of creative problem solving to explore this subject and to **forge creative solutions to assure that future olympic games remain peaceful and nonpolitical.** Send a statement of

your final plan to the International Olympic Committee.

If the animals had their own olympic games what might the events be? Which animals would be heavy favorites to win these events? Who would win the gold medal in the diving competition? Who would win the marathon?

Invent a new sport for the winter or summer olympics for the year 2092. Describe the event, the equipment and facilities needed, and the particular skills future athletes will need to succeed in the 2092 olympics. Write

a newspaper story about the competition and winners in one of the events. Draw an action picture of the first winner competing. Draw the international olympic symbol or logo for the 2092 games.

The olympic games offer strong motivational interest to our students. Let's help them win lots of gold medals for creative activity in the coming olympic year.

Bon voyage!

Jerry Flack, Ph.D., is Associate Professor of Gifted Education at the University of Colorado, Colorado Springs, and author of *Inventing, Inventions and Inventors*.



ANTENNA

Current Developments in Gifted Education

I am proud to announce that I use a computer with ease. However, with pride comes confession. I admit that my thoughts (*usually formulated during an early morning jog*) often pour out first on a **yellow legal pad**. When I read the original draft of Jim Delisle's (1991) "Low Tech--And Proud of It!," handwritten on yellow paper, I thrust it aside because it threatened to reveal my hypocrisy. You see, I have always been an outspoken proponent of technology in education. But deep down, I share Jim's concern that the emphasis on "efficiency" and "output" become greater than the power of "the human mind and the human heart"(p.3).

The technological events that are taking place in our world are at once overwhelming and amazing.

✓ Michigan and Colorado children, ages 6 through 11, have been linked

by FAX machines to write and send stories and artwork about themselves and their communities.

✓ FrEdMail is an educational telecommunications network which links schools, students and educators around the globe. The California-based electronic mail center transmits student writing at any grade level and in any subject through teacher to teacher contacts.

✓ An interactive teleconference via satellite, featuring staff development in gifted and talented education, was initiated in Colorado and supported cooperatively by educational agencies, businesses, universities and parent groups. The audience of teachers, administrators and parents reached across the United States and Canada.

Elsewhere in this issue of *Understanding Our Gifted*, Greg Pattridge

(1991) states that there are over 14,000 educational software titles for home computers (p.1); and in "Emerging Technologies," Jan France (1991) discusses the advances that are taking place at "breakneck speed in virtually every area of computing technology" (p.11).

We have an awesome responsibility as teachers, at home and school, of our most able students. We must facilitate the acquisition of knowledge that changes daily, while emphasizing creativity and compassion as critical elements of learning.

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Dorothy Knopper is a Private Consultant on Gifted Education in Colorado and the publisher of *Understanding Our Gifted*.

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Global Awareness Conference

The Roeper City and Country School is sponsoring a conference on Global Awareness in conjunction with its 50th anniversary celebration. This event will be held November 13-16 in Bloomfield Hills, Michigan. For more information, please contact Ernestine Sanders, Roeper City and Country School, P.O. Box 329, Bloomfield Hills, Michigan 48013. (313) 642-1500.

Illinois Gifted Education Conference

The 1991 Illinois Gifted Education Conference will be held at the Hyatt Regency O'Hare Hotel, near O'Hare Airport, on December 2-4. For information, please contact Arlene Bloom, Conference Chairperson, (708) 798-6600.

Advanced Development

Advanced Development, the first journal on adult giftedness, focuses on inner development rather than achievement. The theme of Volume 3 is "The Possible Human," and the featured theorist is Jean Houston. Etty Hillesum, our moral exemplar, was an inspirational person who attained inner peace during the holocaust. Don't miss this issue! (\$15 for individuals and \$30 for institutions.) To order, contact ISAD, 777 Pearl St., Denver, CO 80203, (303) 837-8378.

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ONLY A PARENT: Three True Stories

Stephanie S. Tolan

GIFTEDNESS: The View From Within

Martha J. Morelock, M.A.

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new technological era in
which this country will
face unprecedented com-
petition to its technologi-
cal leadership. We are
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January-February, 1992

Volume 4, Issue 3

Only a Parent: Three True Stories

Stephanie S. Tolan

Her eight-year-old son came home and told her how he'd been humiliated in front of his fifth grade math class for making an error on the board. When she went to call his teacher, she was so angry her hands were shaking; she dropped the phone. What was happening to her? she wondered. How could she possibly be swept with homicidal rage over something even her son had assured her wasn't "all that big a deal"?

There were 46 of them—parents who had come to this session of their state's gifted conference to learn about "Parenting the Highly Gifted Child." They'd brought their notebooks. They looked up at the speaker with concentrated interest. They needed to hear what she could tell them about how to handle their children, how to deal with schools, neighbors, grandparents. But now she was asking them a question they hadn't expected. She was asking how many of *them* had been highly gifted children. Husbands looked at wives, wives looked at husbands. A few tentative, embarrassed hands went up. More than one started up and was quickly brought down again.

"I wanted to go talk to the principal when they gave my daughter a primer to read in first grade," a mother explained to the district's gifted consultant. "She'd been reading the 'Little House' books at home for two years. But I didn't go. I didn't know what to say. After all, I read

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FOCUS ON:

EMPOWERING PARENTS

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Giftedness: The View From Within

Martha J. Morelock

Ten-year-old Greg Barnes was acknowledged by school personnel as highly gifted. His scholastic achievement test scores placed him in the 99.9th percentile, as did his score on the *Stanford-Binet Intelligence Scale*. On this particular day, when he returned home from school, Mrs. Barnes knew immediately from his despondent expression that the day had been less than ideal.

"Something wrong?" she probed gently.

"Yeah," he said in a tone of thorough disgust, "I got into trouble. We'll have to see the principal tomorrow."

"What for?"

"I got into a fight with Joe and beat him up."

Mrs. Barnes was shocked. Greg was not an aggressive child. He had never reported such an incident before. In fact, he was an extraordinarily sensitive boy who genuinely cared about other people.

"What happened?" she inquired further.

Greg explained that he and Joe had exchanged insults during music class. Both boys, Greg insisted, were at fault. Later, Joe had cornered Greg by the

(Continued on page 11)



FROM THE EDITOR

Happy 1992! It seems fitting in this anniversary year that we embark upon a voyage to a new land: *the interior of giftedness*. The concept of giftedness as behaviors, achievements, products, school placements, or even as the potential for outstanding accomplishment, seems to limit the phenomenon to a two-dimensional perspective—similar to describing the world as flat. Five hundred years ago, Columbus demonstrated that the earth is round and has depth. In these tumultuous times, a rounder, more comprehensive view of giftedness is needed—one which infuses it with a sense of depth.

Recently, a group of professionals, parents and advocates of the gifted, met in Columbus, Ohio, for the purpose of redefining the concept of giftedness. The Columbus Group had become progressively more disconcerted by the exteriorization of giftedness in theory and practice. We shared our initial dialogue with as many people as we could, and discovered that we were not alone in our concerns. What began as a think tank seems to have evolved to somewhat of a grass roots movement to revolutionize the field!

This new terrain is uncharted, and it is difficult to put new concepts into words. So our first attempts may be faltering, but we believe that, in time, we will develop a more encompassing view of giftedness: *the view from within*.

This is the title of Martha Morelock's engaging article, which traces this new conception of giftedness to its precursors, and provides rich, anecdotal information to show how it applies to the real lives of children. Stephanie Tolan, in our other lead article, suggests that the phenomenon of giftedness does not disappear in adulthood, and that our own childhood experiences and adaptations color our perceptions as parents of gifted children. To truly honor our children's giftedness we must honor our own. These articles represent a major departure from the usual perspective of looking at giftedness as a school-based phenomenon.

I am extremely excited about this particular issue of *Understanding Our Gifted*, because in these pages we are breaking new ground. All of our regular contributors have examined the original definition proposed by the Columbus Group and have contributed their own perspectives to the initial version. We are proud to present the synthesis of our thinking as the philosophical foundation of our publication.

But this is only the beginning. We invite you, our readers, to help us refine the definition, contribute your own insights to it, and become a part of this cooperative endeavor. Join us on our voyage to inner space and help shape the future.

Linda Silverman

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Publisher

Dorothy Knopper

Editor

Dr. Linda Kreger Silverman

Cartoonist

Linda Leviton

Column Editors

Lisa Ferguson, *Parent, Haverhill, Massachusetts*

Dorothy Knopper, *Private Consultant for the Gifted, Boulder, Colorado*

Dr. Deirdre Lovecky, *Clinical Psychologist, Providence, Rhode Island*

Dr. Suzanne Perry, *Principal, Aurora Public Schools, Aurora, Colorado*

Dr. Karen C. Nelson, *Emporia State University, Emporia, Kansas*

Stephanie Tolan, *Author and Consultant, Columbus, Ohio*

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HIDDEN GIFTED LEARNER

The Passive Gifted Learner



Tom is content to drift along in school, doing assignments carelessly, not questioning much, accepting whatever is given to him. If asked a more challenging question, or to come up with an opinion of his own, Tom tends to shrug, let others answer, and then respond with a variation of what has already been said.

Tom is an easygoing boy, content to let things happen. He remembers facts easily but does not know how to use them to attain further understanding of a subject. Tom is a passive learner. Facts are poured into him; he does not interpret the meaning of information presented or try to connect it to a body of knowledge. He will give back to the teacher just what has been presented in class. Thus, Tom does well on fact bound tests but poorly on tests that require a more thoughtful analysis. Tom also is stimulus bound. He cannot think beyond applying a familiar formula. When it is suggested that he could solve problems by thinking about them, even if he does not know the formula, Tom is skeptical.

Tom tends to be satisfied with a "good enough" answer. This means it is good enough for Tom, though not necessarily for others. He tends to round off answers because exactitude is not very important, nor are a few wrong answers, or a poorly worded or spelled composition. He, almost but not quite, follows directions and is surprised when his efforts are not appreciated. Some gifted children like Tom develop habits of carelessness, poor attention and lack of responsibility because of undetected learning

disabilities or attention deficit disorder, but others *learn* them. Given a rather uncritical temperament to start with, a boy like Tom who is not challenged early in life, and who is satisfied with accumulating facts, tends to develop poor habits of work completion, poor concentration and poor ability to actually think about work.

In early grades, work is often so easy, and can be accomplished in a slipshod fashion so quickly, that habits of inattention develop. In effect, these children learn to substitute daydreaming for boredom. Daydreaming is much more rewarding than the easy work so they work fast and carelessly in order to turn off. They give the teacher and parents what is asked for, at least enough that they are left alone. Later on in school this catches up with them. Having acquired a habit of daydreaming at the slightest feeling of boredom, they tend to avoid any task that requires work. Also, since they have not learned how to think about a challenge, sustain attention, or work consistently and carefully, more difficult tasks are threatening to them.

By junior high school, the student does poor work, is satisfied with placement in lower level courses, and achieves mediocre grades. Because this type of student has never achieved when work is challenging, he or she does not think it is even possible, and gives up trying. Remediation in the higher grades is difficult: it is easier to prevent the formation of a passive gifted learner by *(1) providing challenging work from the earliest years;*

(2) teaching strategies about how to solve problems instead of only focusing on facts, formulas and procedures; and (3) giving the student work that is worth doing.

Teachers of gifted children in regular classrooms need to be aware of the lifelong problems with motivation and achievement that can ensue when children avoid boredom by daydreaming.

Older passive gifted learners often become afraid to go beyond what is known and safe. They really cannot meet challenges on their own; they haven't learned how to do so. These gifted children need the help of adults in slowly extending their comfort zone beyond what is known and acquiring the tools to handle unfamiliar work. They cannot be left alone to learn independently because they will only retreat further into passivity. Instead, a mentor approach in which the child and adult work together on a project is most helpful. The project is not done independently by the child, but is a product of mutual effort with levels of completion that allow for the child's less than perfect standards. Standards can be slowly raised without pressuring the child to perform at a level of discomfort or anxiety. Over a great deal of time, with much mentoring and support, a passive gifted learner can become more actively involved in meeting challenges independently. It is, however, important to recognize that some passive learners require such support through high school.

Deirdre V. Lovecky, Ph.D., is a licensed clinical psychologist in private practice in Providence, RI, and a frequent author of articles on giftedness in children and adults.

PARENTING

Lisa Goes to School

Lisa's mother is taking her to Nursery School for the first time. They enter the room. It is a friendly place and the teacher greets them warmly. This is a big moment for both of them. It is Lisa's first encounter with an institution of the larger world. Lisa's whole personality has been pushing toward an expanded horizon.

Two opposing experiences are visible in Lisa's face. One is fear of the unknown and of the separation from her mother. It makes her hold on tight, her little hands perspiring. The other is her deep need to penetrate the unknown. Her eyes are glittering as she surveys the situation. So many toys, so many other children. She momentarily solves the problem by pulling her mother all over the room and discussing everything excitedly with her.

When the teacher asks her mother to leave, Lisa begins to cry. She is deeply aware of the drama of the situation. This is a big step, not to be taken lightly. Some of the other children let their parents go easily. Some cried after the parent had left. Lisa needs to acquaint herself with every aspect of the environment, the teachers, the rules and expectations, where the bathroom is, and if someone would console her if she hurt herself. She needs to feel familiar before she can feel safe. She is aware that she is facing the future on her own.

The teacher empathizes with Lisa and does not insist that her mother leave. The next day Lisa is so fascinated with

all the opportunities for play and exploration that she lets her mother go after just a slight hesitation. Had the teacher insisted on her mother's leaving the first day, Lisa might have refused to return. Her first encounter with the outside world would have been a negative one.

As time goes on, there are other hurdles. Lisa quickly becomes a leader of the group and the children like her. But it is hard for her to understand that other children do not understand the complicated rules she invents for games. Sitting in the circle quickly becomes boring. She becomes restless. At other times, she is totally absorbed by the teacher's stories, the singing and by some of the projects. She loves the field trips. She finds a gifted friend. Together they watch the bunny and learn about the difference between animate and inanimate objects. "Only things that are alive can die," she explains to her teachers.

One of Lisa's teachers is fascinated by her; the other one finds her behavior "immature" and her parents "too lenient." Soon she and that teacher are involved in a power struggle, often

won by Lisa. The world of both Lisa and her parents has expanded. Her parents realize that they have to interpret Lisa to the school and become her advocate.

Lisa's parents are learning as much as Lisa from her entrance into the world of education. They realize that they need to change their perception of teachers as experts to include the teacher as a human being who can be threatened by the quick intelligence and drive of a three year old. They realize that education is a three-way process which involves the parents as advocates for the child. Lisa's parents are listening to their own empathic impression and understand both Lisa and the teacher in their need for self-actualization. They understand it is up to them to overcome this hurdle and feel confident in finding ways of handling it respectfully.

In the next column, I will discuss advocacy of parents of gifted children.

Dr. Annemarie Roeper is a consultant on the gifted in Oakland, CA, and author of the book, *Educating Children for Life*. Co-founder of the Roeper City and Country School and the *Roeper Review*, Annemarie has inspired a worldwide focus on global awareness in gifted education. (Please see note on Bulletin Board.)





INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES

Karen C. Nelson

The Products of Learning

Gifted education is sometimes accused of emphasizing process—creative problem solving techniques, research and thinking skills—at the expense of the content or products of learning. Without neglecting skill development, there are several good reasons why product should sometimes receive emphasis. Working to design, refine and complete a product to demonstrate the results of independent study or research can help students develop task commitment, a sense of accomplishment and skills of self-assessment.

Some gifted students are notorious project "starters" with more interests and enthusiasms than time to pursue these interests to a conclusion. (Some of us as teachers and parents are like this, too.) Other students find it hard to complete a project because perfectionistic tendencies tell them the product is never good enough to be pronounced done. They can always think of more they might do. Or they simply avoid closure because their own impossibly high standards have not been met.

Not every project needs to be finished, just for the sake of finishing; there are

times when teachers can concede that learning has occurred before the end product is finished. Both "starters" and perfectionists will benefit from the requirement that *some* projects must be completed to a revised and refined end product. A rule of thumb might be that each student produce one such product each school year.

A complete product representing hard work and persistence produces a sense of accomplishment that can be an effective reinforcer of intrinsic motivation to learn and achieve. For this reason, students should have a chance to choose what their products will be. A written report is the most used product format in all of education. Student motivation will usually be higher if other choices are offered—especially for underachieving and learning disabled gifted.

The Product Pouch (1980) provides 100 student product ideas: sand casting, travelogue, greeting card, project cube, photo essay—to name a few. Each idea is on a 4" x 11" card with a brief description or example. The ideas are not highly novel and do not include computer options but they still provide students (and teachers) with many alternatives. Students who can't deal with 100 options might be handed three or four ideas to choose from. Teachers or students could create their own product pouch or file of product ideas they have enjoyed using. *The Product Pouch* itself is a simple, practical idea for the gifted

education consultant to share with regular education teachers as a way to vary book reports, etc., and as a tool to stimulate creativity in the classroom.

Once a product has been produced, a format for product evaluation is a good idea. Factors to include: statement of purpose; objectives achieved; quality for age/grade level; care, attention to detail; time, effort, energy; originality of idea or contribution (Reis and Renzulli, 1991). To help students develop skills of self-assessment, the student and teacher (or other adult) could evaluate the product independently, then meet to compare their evaluations and discuss discrepancies in the ratings.

Tangible products help students remember content studied and learning that occurred. With a balance of content, process and product your students will not be those who later say, "All we ever did in our gifted class was play games..."

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Karen C. Nelson, Ph.D., is Coordinator of the graduate program in gifted education at Emporia State University in Kansas. She has been a public school teacher, curriculum editor, writer and poet.

THE READING ROOM

Welcome. This visit we focus on young adult (YA) books in which parent-child relationships are central. A number of writers for young readers admit to a "first rule" in their work—*get rid of the parents before the book begins or as soon as possible thereafter*. The reason for this is the widely accepted theory that children prefer to read of the exploits of other children unencumbered by parental restrictions. And, since one of the primary tasks of adolescents is separation from parents, many YA books assume that separation. But some writers believe that much of the richest literary territory is the *family*. Real children do not face life or develop personalities and values on their own, but within a family framework in which parents may be role models or embarrassments, heroes or villains.

In Marguerite Murray's (1988) book, *Like Seabirds Flying Home*, sixteen-year-old Shelley Joyner finds herself brought suddenly and inexplicably to the wild, desolate coastline of Maine, by her dying father. Shelley has spent her childhood "taking care" of her parents, a physically weak father able to work only at poorly paid jobs, and a self-centered mother whose expectation of a comfortable life has never been fulfilled, but who cannot bring herself to do anything to achieve it. Shelley has never had a chance to be a child; her mother has never gone beyond childhood.

As Shelley begins to settle in to the beauty, wildness and isolation of their new home, she learns that it is, indeed,

home; the grandfather who had died when her father was a child had been born and raised there, and the close-knit community recognizes and takes her in. As she fights to create a life, Shelley must learn both to accept her parents for who they are, and to give them up. She must also learn, as her last name implies, that no person is strong enough to get through life alone. An adult must be able to take care of herself, but must also learn to accept the help of others.

In my own book, *No Safe Harbors*, sixteen-year-old Amanda Sterling, and eighteen-year-old Joe Schmidt, must each come to terms with a father's betrayal. Joe, product of a working class background, wishes to go to college and to be a poet. His father, demanding a more practical choice of career, refuses to help, refuses even to submit to the indignities of a financial aid form, so Joe must put off school and work to establish his independence. Amanda is the wealthy daughter of the mayor of a small city, a man she loves and idolizes. When her father is indicted in a scandal over financial kickbacks, she defends him, refusing to believe the charges until she learns a truth she cannot face.

Together, Joe and Amanda begin to make their own choices, to face questions of their own, developing characters, judging their fathers and, finally, themselves.

These books can lead adolescents putting together their own identities to consider the place of parents in their lives, of conflicting values, responsibilities and choices. Each of us makes judgments about those who raise us, learning in part from their models how to be ourselves.

Stephanie Tolan, from Columbus, Ohio, is a noted author of children's books and one of the authors of the award-winning book, *Guiding the Gifted Child*.



BRIGHT BEGINNINGS

The Home Environment

Spaces and Places for Kids

"This house looks like a cyclone hit it!" Ever hear that line coming out of your mouth? It seems like gifted kids have a knack for getting so much junk strewn around the house that you feel like you are constantly living in the aftermath of severe weather. A combination of tolerance and compromise seems to work best here. Bright kids have a genuine need to exercise their imagination—by setting up a "space shuttle," for instance. That doesn't mean that it has to be set up in the middle of the living room, that it has to stay there for two weeks or that your best crystal bowl is the only thing that will work as the viewing screen. The same rules apply whether we're considering the 1000 piece jigsaw puzzle, the model circulatory system, the magic carpet or whatever your child's passion is today:

- ☞ *The project has to be set up some place where it doesn't impede any major family function.*
- ☞ *It can stay out as long as it's being used ("I'm going to get back to it next week" is not good enough).*
- ☞ *There are some items that belong to others and are not fair game for experimentation (at least not without asking first!).*

The Home Workshop

As kids approach school age, some of life's finest moments may be spent

in the home workshop. Do consider this option for your child. It makes a major dent in the house-as-pigsty dilemma and gives children a powerful sense of competence. The workshop can be a corner of the bedroom, a nook in the basement—anywhere the child can set up and maintain an inventory of interesting materials and supplies in a passion area. The workshop might become the Mad Lab where your Five discovers what happens when you mix baking powder and vinegar. It may serve as the Writer's Workshop where your Six pens her first real book or the Studio where that award winning sculpture is crafted. You will decide together how to equip the workshop, but some good basics might include:

Paper—All kinds, colors, sizes. Sources abound if you look. Printshops often discard odd shaped leftover card stock in beautiful colors. Junk mail affords interesting kinds of paper, too. Remember, one blank side is all you need! The same is true of leftover computer paper.

Writing Materials—Pens, crayons, markers, pencils, chalk—there are so

many things you can use to make a mark.

"Reference" Books—Little guys need fewer encyclopedias and more neat nonfiction books written for their reading or looking level. Children's nonfiction has really blossomed since we were kids. The library—a place you will visit often with your able little learner, anyway—is a fabulous free place to start looking.

Interest Equipment—Maybe you'll need model glue and paint or perhaps it will be rubber tubing and food coloring. Who knows? Each interest area comes with its own repertoire of specialized supplies that may be needed to make the workshop truly authentic and useful for your child, but whether it's snakes or slide rules, the home environment is one important way to nurture your child for the brightest of beginnings.

Suzanne Perry, Ph.D., is principal at Clyde Miller Elementary School in the Aurora Public Schools in Colorado, and author of the children's book, *Giftedness: Living with It and Liking It*.



before I went to school, too. Maybe it doesn't mean that much. They know more than I do about teaching kids. I'm only a parent."

* * *

Only a parent. When we learn that our children are gifted many of us think this way. We become involved with their education, with looking for appropriate programs, finding good and understanding teachers, searching out challenging activities or other children with like interests. Our involvement is as parents, on behalf of our children. The focus is on them, on their differences, their needs, their future.

We want to do our best for them, to raise them as whole, healthy and well-educated human beings, ready and able to make use of their gifts. However, thinking of ourselves *only as parents* of gifted children and keeping our focus resolutely on them may make that job more difficult.

Where Did "It" Come From?

We're comfortable with such observations as, "Your son has your eyes, your husband's hands, your father's nose." It may be harder to accept that our children's astonishing minds could have some actual, genetic connection to our own.

For most parents the difficulty perceiving the connection lies in not fully understanding their own differences from the norm. Most were not identified as "gifted" in childhood. Some, those few young enough or from a cosmopolitan-enough background to have been labeled, may not have believed the label. Few of us, children or adults, feel gifted.

It is often said that the brighter you are, the more aware you are of what you *don't* know. It is hard to feel unusually intelligent if you don't know how a computer works or what quasars and quarks *really* are, or who wrote *The Mayor of Castorbridge*.

Someone knows all this; most of us believe that somewhere there are people who know this and everything we know besides. That would be our definition of an unusually intelligent person—not us.

Another difficulty is the current

definition of giftedness that focuses on externals—on behaviors, achievement and success. Aware of our own failures (some of which may appear to

others as successes, but fall far short of our own intended goals) we do not perceive ourselves as gifted.

A new (and evolving) definition of giftedness, first articulated by the Columbus Group (1991), might allow us to look at ourselves, our lives and our achievements differently. According to this definition, what we call giftedness is an internal innate reality, "asynchronous development," which puts the gifted person outside normal developmental patterns from birth. Though intellectual, emotional and social development may all progress at an accelerated pace, they do not move in synchrony, so that the individual may understand intellectually far more than can be assimilated emotionally. The result is a child not only out of sync with peers, but in many ways out of sync with him- or herself. From the reality of accelerated but uneven development comes the potential for unusual or even world-changing achievement, but the reality (an often painful experience of life) is there whether the potential for achievement is realized or not. Though parents might recognize this new way of looking at giftedness, it was not available to us as children, when we were forming our images of ourselves.

Genetic Patterns

Perhaps there are children whose inborn intellectual capacity is beyond that of both parents. But more often, gifted children are the offspring of gifted adults. And while it's possible that one parent is very bright and one parent is not, where a marriage is reasonably successful, it is more likely that the partners are intellectually compatible. Most of us choose our mates as we choose our friends, from those with whom we can talk, joke, share ideas and thoughts.

Genetics assures that most often the parents faced with raising and educating gifted children were themselves gifted children (Albert, 1980; Hollingworth, 1926). This can be a good thing, making possible valuable identification and understanding between the generations. But often it causes real difficulty, particularly for those who were not identified or who had no help in coping with their differences. It is hard to help one's child resolve issues one has not yet resolved for oneself.

Few gifted adults have come to terms with their own giftedness. As we set out to help our children come to terms with theirs, our blind spots, denials, cover-ups and strategies for self-preservation get in our way—to say nothing of the feelings we have brought with us, however hidden, from our early years.

Double Layers of Feeling

The mother who was surprised by the intensity of her rage at her son's classroom humiliation was encountering the feelings she had experienced

*'asynchronous development'
...puts the gifted person
outside normal developmental
patterns from birth.*

(with no possible outlet) when forced to endure similar humiliations in her own school years. She was reacting not simply as a mother, but also as a wounded child; her deepest impulse was to strike out at the teacher who had hurt her son and, by proxy, the teachers who had hurt her.

By the time this woman had finished elementary

school, she had learned the lesson that being too bright caused pain. So she had learned to "play the game," to deny her abilities or to define them as others did, as *annoyances* or even character flaws. She went on to repress the pain (and the rage it engendered) and consciously remembered only liking school. So successful had her internal cover-up been that she had made no connection between her son's giftedness and herself. The eruption of her rage became the first step on a long process of self-discovery.

Educators often accuse the parents of gifted children of "overinvesting" in their children, taking their ups and downs too seriously, becoming too emotional when dealing with school personnel. It is no wonder that this emotional intensity occurs when parents, often unaware of it themselves, experience feelings on two levels—as parents and as the powerless children they themselves once were. They may feel an overwhelming need to fix for their children what they could not fix for themselves. In the process, they may "come on too strong," alienating teachers and principals, other parents, even the children who themselves may be trying to hide

her own giftedness in childhood, those strategies may cause difficulties when the time comes to negotiate with school authorities or help their children deal with social or emotional problems.

The child who rebelled against authority enters a principal's office as a parent with a chip on his or her shoulder

and may find rational negotiation impossible. The child who knuckled under and followed all the rules may be cowed even in adulthood by the

aura of the principal's office, may be unable to challenge authority to obtain appropriate educational programs for a gifted son or daughter. The child who perceived her unusual intelligence as a flaw may as a mother find herself embarrassed and upset at discovering the same flaw in her children. Her impulse may be to apologize for that intelligence rather than demanding appropriate educational strategies.

The parent whose childhood was marked by social difficulties caused by being out of sync with classmates may either too readily sanction a child's total withdrawal from other children or push too hard for peer interaction. The parent who chose in childhood to please adults rather than find ways to make social connections with other children may demand the same choice from a child, focusing on academics and belittling or ignoring the child's real desire to find friends.

Parents who learned in childhood that thoughts and ideas were safer and more understandable than feelings may be unable to make emotional connections with their own children. They may value their children's

intellectual abilities, but offer little support for the whole human beings those children are.

And parents whose self-esteem was crippled by a world that did not understand or accept them may either be unable to believe that their offspring can be special in any way ("Me? Have a gifted child? Don't be ridiculous!") or may see their gifted offspring as their only accomplishments in life. Both responses can hurt a child's chances of developing healthy self-esteem.

Looking in the Mirror

When our children's giftedness is identified, our first impulse is to look outward, to schools or books, conferences or experts, trying to find the best way to handle whatever issues giftedness will raise. Few of us begin by looking in the mirror, remembering our own childhood experiences, our own schooling, parenting, friendships and feelings. But there is real value to doing this. It may, in fact, be a necessity. Think about it, and think about it hard. Were you a gifted child? Did you know it? Are you gifted now?

How do these questions make you feel?

If you know your child is gifted, but questions about yourself make you uncomfortable, consider the reason for those feelings. Are

they caused by your certainty that your child's mind is better than your own? Or could they be caused by a pattern of denial and cover-up that got you through a school system, a social world and the complex realm of childhood emotions with as little pain as possible? Might you have hidden, even from yourself, feelings too difficult to manage?

Few gifted adults have come to terms with their own giftedness.

It is hard to help one's child resolve issues one has not yet resolved for oneself.

Old Coping Strategies May Backfire

No matter what coping strategies a parent developed to deal with his or

Finding the Hidden Self

For many of us, these questions are hard to answer, particularly in the beginning. Like the mother overwhelmed by rage, we may have no conscious awareness of many aspects of our own childhood. Or we may have very mixed awareness. We may have words other than "gifted" for what we thought ourselves to be, what we knew we were. We may remember such terms as "quick," or "smart" or "good at school"; often those terms were connected only to academics, and we may have been reminded that there was much more to life than school. Some of us remember being called "disruptive" or "disrespectful" or, as one woman's mother said, when asked to describe her in one word—"annoying."

Though we had no pull-out programs, many of us were sent from the classroom to run the ditto machine or carry notes. We were asked to help other children with math or spelling words. Sometimes that difference was pleasant, sometimes not. Often, if we made a mistake, we were pounced on especially hard—"and you're supposed to be so smart!"

Besides such attention to any mistakes, we may have been aware of our own ignorance and confusion. When something was explained, other kids seemed to understand, but the explanation raised a whole new set of questions for us. So, even while others called us smart, we may have thought of ourselves as dumb.

Some of us couldn't concentrate on school work or refused to do anything we didn't value, then judged ourselves by the low grades we got, or keenly felt the constant criticism that we were "not living up to our potential." Others reveled in A's and gold stars, while secretly wondering what there was to praise in the foolish activity (hardly work) it took to achieve them.

Some of the achievers, running into the first "tough" courses in high school or college, may have felt suddenly stupid. Even if, as adults, we are successful, we may still expect at any moment to be unmasked, shown to be the frauds we secretly believe ourselves to be.

A journey of self-discovery, undertaken as we attempt to help our children discover, accept, develop and use their gifts, can have enormous benefits both for us and for them. As we observe the problems our children are having with teachers and with classmates, we may suddenly understand the times in our lives when we've alienated others without meaning to, perhaps by pointing out flaws in the way some job is being done. We may see for the first time why a boss failed to appreciate us, why a co-worker turned against us. Thinking of ourselves, like our children, as "gifted," lets us come up with ways we could have handled ourselves differently; we can then offer those insights to our children and benefit from them in the future ourselves.

Sharing New Self-Esteem

Sharing our own childhood experiences with our children can help them to feel less different, can give them a sense of belonging—in their families—that they have trouble developing in the larger world. But to do that we must rediscover those experiences for ourselves, and deal with them in the light of new understanding.

One mother tells of coming home from a gifted conference and re-experiencing on the plane dreadful confrontations with two early grade teachers. The pain brought tears "all the way from Chicago to New York," but the realization that it was her intelligence and not her character that had caused defensive teachers to attack

strengthened her image of herself. Later she was able to talk about those experiences with a daughter who faced similar treatment, assuring her that the problem was in the teacher's perceptions, not in the child's reality. Knowing and accepting her own intelligence allowed the mother to make a case for acceptance. Mother and daughter found strength in their sharing of pain and began, too, to share the special joys their gifts could bring.

Discovering and coming to terms with our own giftedness opens up a world of experience for us and a world of connection with our children. As Annemarie Roeper (1991) has said,

The gifted person has the capacity to penetrate the complexities of the landscape of life and understand the supreme interconnectedness. Experiencing one's own giftedness—one's creative abilities—is one of the most exciting aspects of the gifted person's life. (p.98)

As parents, helping our gifted children grow and develop, we can share this experience, living our own growth and development more fully. One of the best things about raising gifted children may be the selves we discover along the way.

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Stephanie Tolan, from Columbus, Ohio, is a noted author of children's books and one of the authors of the award-winning book, *Guiding the Gifted Child*.

lockers, taunting him, threatening to beat him up, and egging Greg on to fight. Greg responded by punching Joe, who punched Greg back. When the teacher came onto the scene, Joe was crying while Greg continued to rain punches upon him.

"Well, it sounds like you stood up for yourself..." began Mrs. Barnes. She was surprised at Greg's immediate and heated denial....

"No, Mom—it wasn't that simple."

"But wasn't he threatening to beat you up?"

"No, Mom! You don't understand!"

Greg was getting visibly more upset as Mrs. Barnes attempted to convey that she was not being judgmental. Unable to comprehend why her efforts to convey caring and understanding were being met with mounting frustration, Mrs. Barnes decided to defuse the issue....

"O.K. Why don't you write down what happened and explain how you feel about it. Obviously you were there and you know why it happened better than I do."

Greg willingly took a seat at the typewriter and laboriously typed out his story and explanation. An hour and a half later, he handed the pages to his mother... "It all began in third grade..." started the first paragraph. Greg went on to describe in careful detail how he and Joe had met and embarked upon a rocky friendship. At certain times, Joe seemed to want to be friends. At other times, Joe refused to allow Greg to participate in ongoing playground activities. Greg admitted to sometimes leveling "insults" at Joe in retaliation for these playground rejec-

tions. Greg listed incidents from 3rd and 4th grades as well as the 5th grade incident which precipitated the immediate problem. For each incident, he detailed each child's behaviors with painful accuracy in an effort to render an objective view of what had happened. Greg's outburst was, according to him, not only a response to the day's happenings, but a reaction to the entire pattern of incidents composing their relationship over the past two years. The argument of the day was simply "the straw that broke the camel's back."

The next day, Joe, too, wrote out his version of the fight. He wrote simply, "Greg hit me and then I hit him back and he kept hitting me."

The Different Reality that Marks Giftedness

Greg and Joe had participated in the same fight. Yet, Greg was fighting over a broader and more complex issue than was Joe. Greg had an unusually retentive memory and an extraordinary ability to analyze the roles played by both boys in an ongoing series of incidents composing a two year relationship. Joe, a child with more average cognitive abilities, lived each incident as it occurred and forgot it when it was resolved for

the day. Apparently Greg and Joe were reacting to very different and individual realities.

Or, consider four-year-old Jennie. Jennie's grandfather died several months ago;

Jennie is asking questions about death and showing evidence of emotional upset. Her mother tries to reassure her by telling her that she need not worry—she and Mommy and Daddy

will live a long time. She will grow up and have children and Mommy will be a grandmother. Jennie responds in trembling voice, "But you don't know, Mommy. Even children die sometimes. Nobody knows for sure..."

Most four year olds would simply accept the mother's reassurance. Jennie, however, like Greg, is highly gifted. Consequently, her logical and abstract reasoning abilities far exceed those of most four year olds. They create for her a reality more complex and threatening than that facing her age-mates. Like average four year olds, she needs to believe her mother in order to feel emotionally secure. However, her advanced cognitive capacities allow her to see too clearly the faulty logic. She is left vulnerable and bereft of comfort.

Giftedness as Asynchronous Development

Greg and Jennie exhibit a lack of synchronicity in the rates of their cognitive, emotional and physical development. Jennie's physical development is similar to that of an average four year old, while her cognitive development more nearly approximates that of a child at least twice her age (Morelock, 1991). The emotional *needs* which must be fulfilled for Jennie's healthy emotional development to take place are similar to those of other four year olds. In order to feel secure, to trust in the world and to begin to develop her own identity, Jennie requires a certain comfortable predictability in her daily existence. She also needs to have a simple, solid trust in the strength and reliability of her parents. However, the fulfillment of those four-year-old emotional needs is complicated by Jennie's extraordinary capacity for abstract thought. Her internally imposed demand for logical consistency leaves her emotionally unable to

The fulfillment of those four-year-old emotional needs is complicated by Jennie's extraordinary capacity for abstract thought.

accept anything contradicting it. Children *do* die. Mommies and Daddies *aren't* omnipotent and omniscient. For Jennie—and for other gifted children like her—the world can threaten to dissolve into unpredictable and frightening chaos.

Roedell (1988) points out that young gifted readers or children who watch the television news can be exposed to highly complex, emotionally charged information that they may not be mature enough to deal with.

The parent of an intellectually advanced four year old described how he came upon his daughter looking terrified as she read the Bible. When he inquired about her concern, she replied, "I'm reading The Book of Revelations, and it's really scary!" (p. 7)

Children like Jennie, and the four year old cited by Roedell, lack the life experience necessary for interpreting the cognitive realities that confront them.

Dysplasia

A number of theorists and researchers have independently written about asynchronous development. Gowan (1974) discussed the implications of cognitive capacities which outstrip emotional (affective) development. He referred to asynchronous development as "dysplasia":

...a disagreement, dissonance, or disparity either between the age of the individual, which should place him in one stage, and the...stage he is actually in, ...or disparity between the cognitive stage he is in and the affective stage he is in...(p. 165).

Gowan emphasized the trauma which can result when an individual is thrust prematurely and abruptly into a higher level of cognitive awareness...

Just as the baby developing within the womb is surrounded by a placenta, we are all shielded from external reality

by an envelope which protects us from it. Development, hence, consists (in post-uterine as in prenatal existence) in growth and specialization which will allow for the appropriate penetration of the placental envelope so that the individual can gain greater freedom and interaction with the external world. But if this placental shell is ruptured too soon, then chaos results, and special means are required to save the individual and nurse him back to healthy development. (p. 188)

Dyssynchrony

Terrassier's (1985) "dyssynchrony," is another related theory. It includes both *internal* aspects, involving disparate rates of development among the various capacities of the child, and *social* or *external* aspects, involving gifted children's resultant relationships with environmental circumstances.

External dyssynchrony refers to the lack of natural fit between the gifted child and a school curriculum geared to average children of the same chronological age. It also suggests any experience when a gifted child does not "fit" the cultural expectations of how a child of his or her chronological age "should" think, feel, or act.

Remember Greg, for example, in the scenario about the fight with Joe. Mrs. Barnes' initial difficulty in characterizing what had happened stemmed from her viewing the incident from the perspective she assumed a child Greg's age to have taken. Greg's emotionally intense denial was a clue that she had to listen more carefully if she wanted to get a glimpse of Greg's unique personal reality. Greg's understanding of the incident was out of sync with Mrs. Barnes' expectations.

The cultural expectations aspect of external dyssynchrony is also exemplified in the story that one mother told about trying to find books for her three-year-old son who was reading on a second grade level. She recounted her frustration when she discovered that the books available on his reading level all dealt with stories about experiences common to older children, such as losing one's first tooth or going to school. The cultural expectations with regard to which story themes would be appropriate for a child reading on a second grade level were simply out of sync with the needs of her preschooler.

In addition, external dyssynchrony involves problems gifted children have in developing friendships. When gifted children find other children who have similar intellectual abilities and interests, their newfound companions are likely to be older and more physically mature (Terrassier, 1985).

In such cases, the older child will have considerable advantage in terms of real-world experience and physical capabilities.

Asynchrony

As Stephanie Tolan indicated in the other lead article

(p.8), asynchronous development places gifted individuals outside normal developmental patterns from birth to adulthood. Their experiences are dramatically different from the norm because of their expanded awareness. Additionally, they may never get feedback corroborating and validating their perceptions. This can lead to self-doubt and a precarious sense of self.

In the scenario above, Greg was especially fortunate in that he could convey through his writing his precise view of the incident with Joe.

Clearly, in order to help children like Greg and Jennie, we need to explore their inner worlds—the inner experience and reality of giftedness.

Furthermore, his previous experience with his mother and his principal led him to feel confident that *his version of reality would be taken seriously* by the adults in his life. It was this trust that freed him to write the story exactly as he had experienced it.

Clearly, in order to help children like Greg and Jennie, we need to explore their inner worlds—the inner experience and reality of giftedness. Clearly as well, we cannot hope to understand the nature of giftedness without understanding those inner worlds. Surprisingly, however, up until now, definitions of giftedness, and research based on those definitions, have dealt minimally with reality as seen through the eyes of the gifted. In a recent major book covering contemporary conceptions of giftedness, *all of the approaches mentioned emerged out of definitions based on some aspect of achievement or performance* (Sternberg & Davidson, 1986). Nevertheless, some researchers have begun to investigate giftedness from an internal perspective. These studies deal mainly with the emotional lives of the gifted.

Emotionality and the Gifted

Manifested in Jennie's and Greg's responses to the issues confronting them is an intensity of emotion. Both of them felt an *emotionally infused need* to understand the truth of their situation and to communicate that truth to others. This was manifested in Jennie's fearful yet strong insistence that her mother acknowledge the limits of what she could promise in the way of longevity. It was manifested as well in Greg's frustration when the account his mother offered did not agree with what he knew to be the truth. It was also manifested in the intensity with which he committed himself to the writing of his story.

Dabrowski (1972) found emotional intensity and sensitivity to be characteristic of the intellectually and artistically gifted. He outlined five dimensions

through which this intensity can be displayed and called them "forms of psychic overexcitability" to underline the enhancement and intensification of mental activity much beyond the ordinary:

psychochomotor—an augmented capacity for being active and energetic, expressed as movement, restlessness, drivenness

sensual—an enhanced differentiation and aliveness of sensual experience

intellectual—avidity for knowledge and the search for truth—expressed as discovery, questioning, and love of ideas and theoretical analysis

imaginational—the power of thought creation—expressed through vividness of imagery, richness of association, liking for the unusual, and a facility for dreams, fantasies, and inventions

emotional—the heart—recognized in the great depth and intensity of emotional life expressed through a wide range of feelings, attachments, compassion, heightened sense of responsibility, and scrupulous self-examination. (Piechowski, 1991, p. 287)

Dabrowski introduced the concept of "developmental potential," which he saw as talents and intellectual abilities infused and motivated through the psychic overexcitabilities. The stronger these psychic overexcitabilities are in a particular individual, the more developmental potential he or she possesses.

While the Dabrowskian framework addresses emotional intensity, the work of Sommers (1981) links the breadth of emotional responsiveness to cognitive complexity. She introduced the concept of "emotional range" to denote the number and variety of emotions experienced by an individual. Sommers found that college students evidencing advanced cognitive organization had a wider "emotional range." She concludes:

The picture of the more emotional person, as it is emerging from this research... reveals that a high level of

emotional responsiveness may be associated with advanced cognitive organization. All of the cognitive skills that were found to be related to the ability to respond with more emotions are marks of a highly organized awareness—an awareness that might be governed by a well-structured system of values, oughts, and beliefs, but not by momentary excitements. (p. 560)

Thus, we have the beginnings of an internal view of giftedness. The heightened and broadened emotionality of the gifted, the role played by a well-structured system of values in evoking emotional reactions, and the asynchronicity of development leads us to two important questions. The first is a very practical one, while the second is theoretical: (1) How does this "view from within" help us to deal with the Jennies and Gregs of the world? (2) How do we incorporate the "view from within" into our definition of giftedness?

The Practical Implications of the View From Within

The view from within allows us to see a **three dimensional** gifted child rather than giftedness simply as manifested through "two-dimensional" achievement criteria. When we set about to teach, counsel, or parent Jennie or Greg, we do so knowing that we must allow the child to communicate to us that unique personal reality rich with ascribed meaning constructed by a complex awareness. When children like Jennie and Greg experience a situation, they superimpose on it their remembrances of past experiences and their projections of future ramifications should they act in a number of different ways. They live life by analyzing it step by step while emotionally responding to that analysis.

Thus, we allow a Greg to write out his impressions if that is the best way for

him to convey them to us. And we are not impatient with the detail he insists must be a part of his account. Greg must be helped to see, of course, that others do not always perceive experiences with such detailed clarity or infused with such emotional intensity and significance—especially other children his age. Nevertheless, this should not be conveyed as a defect on his part, such as “oversensitivity” or a tendency to “carry a grudge.” Rather, he needs first to have his view of reality validated, and second, to be helped to find ways of building bridges with other children and not faulting them because of their differing level of awareness.

We can think out with Greg what he could have done differently at various points in the relationship to prevent things from escalating to the point where a fight occurred. We can

also elicit his aid in projecting the best way to handle his future interactions with Joe.

At the same time, children like Joe need to be made aware of the role they play in instigating unnecessary ill feelings. Joe does not have the extensive memory and keen analytical ability that would allow him to understand the relationship in the same way Greg does. Nevertheless, we can help him to understand more completely the dynamics leading to the most recent conflict and to think out with him what he could have done differently to prevent the fight. We can also design some clear rules for his future interactions with Greg.

Because of the differences in Greg’s and Joe’s reality pictures about the fight, these initial explorations should be conducted *separately* with each boy. That way, we can confine—or expand—the discussion to focus on whichever reality we are dealing with.

Afterwards, if we choose, we can bring the two boys together to talk about the aspect of the situation which both boys will share—the “rules” for their interaction in the future.

When we approach Jennie, we must keep in mind that we must satisfy her advanced cognitive needs while remaining attuned to her four-year-old emotional ones—no easy task! In the scenario presented, her mother can point out to Jennie that everyone in Jennie’s family is well, that they have periodic check-ups at the doctor’s office to make sure that they stay well and that there is, therefore, little prob-

ability that anyone will die in the immediate future. They also keep their car in very good condition, wear their seatbelts, and take other safety precautions to prevent accidents. Even so, of course, the

bottom line, as Jennie knows on some level, is that “No one knows for sure.” For this, all Mom can offer is reassuring hugs, and her conveyed confidence that all will be well. In Jennie’s case, however, the conveyed confidence *must* be couched within a context of taking Jennie’s questions very seriously, acknowledging the inevitability and unpredictability of death. Otherwise, her logic will not allow her to accept the offered comfort.

Defining Giftedness From Within

Recently, a group of theorists, practitioners, and parents meeting in Columbus, Ohio, proposed that asynchronous development—and the emotional consequences and altered quality of life stemming from it—is at the very heart of giftedness (Columbus Group, 1991). The Columbus Group asserts that the contemporary tendency to define giftedness as behaviors,

achievement, products or school placements, **external** to the individual, necessarily misses the essence of giftedness—how it alters the meaning of life experience for the gifted individual. Consequently, the Group offers the following preliminary attempt at a phenomenological definition, which at this point, may apply best to the highly gifted:

Giftedness is asynchronous development in which advanced cognitive abilities and heightened intensity combine to create inner experiences and awareness that are qualitatively different from the norm. This asynchrony increases with higher intellectual capacity. The uniqueness of the gifted renders them particularly vulnerable and requires modifications in parenting, teaching and counseling in order for them to develop optimally. (The Columbus Group, 1991)

If development is perceived as a lifelong process, and the stage theories as providing the markers of normal development, giftedness can then be understood as producing *atypical* development throughout the lifespan in terms of awareness, perceptions, emotional responses and life experiences. This places the gifted individual developmentally out of sync both internally, in relation to the different aspects of development, and externally, in relation to cultural expectations.

This definition of giftedness allows penetration beyond behavioral achievement or non-achievement. Achievement remains an interesting and significant *expression* of giftedness, and it continues to be important to examine whether it occurs and why or why not. Nevertheless, it is neither the essence of giftedness nor the most important aspect of it. The Columbus Group definition calls for a shift of focus from the external products of giftedness to the true nature of the phenomenon itself. This shift to a view from within is an important move towards both understanding giftedness and understanding our gifted.

....we must allow the child to communicate to us that unique personal reality rich with ascribed meaning constructed by a complex awareness.

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Editorial Note: The Columbus Group definition is appearing in print for the first time. It is still in its embryonic stage, and, hopefully, will evolve to a comprehensive view of giftedness which focuses on the internal experience of the individual rather than the external manifestations of the phenomenon. In an article of this length, it has been impossible to share all of the dialogue that led to its conception. However, that dialogue, like the definition, is incomplete. Your participation in the dialogue and in the formulation of this definition are

welcome. It is much more difficult to articulate elusive internal variables than to describe external behavior. Therefore, your assistance and input in the process would be invaluable to refine the definition and help it evolve to complete maturity. Please write to Linda Silverman at *Understanding Our Gifted*, P.O. Box 18268, Boulder, CO 80308-8268, and share your perspective on this new definition.

Martha J. Morelock, M.A., is a doctoral candidate in child study at the Eliot-Pearson Department of Child Study, Tufts University.

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THE HIGHLY GIFTED

A Quiet Crisis (Part II)

In the last issue, several pressing concerns of advocates of highly gifted children were explored within the context of current political and economic trends. In this column, specific suggestions are provided for coping with these concerns.

Cohen, Jeffcott, and Swartz (1991), discussing current trends in gifted education, speak of "the broadening role of the gifted specialist to include service to all students" (p. 15). We do not ask the teacher of mentally retarded children or the learning disabilities specialist to curtail badly needed individual instruction with severely handicapped children so that she can "bring out the hidden disabilities in all children." However, we seem to be asking teachers of the gifted to do something akin to this. The consequences of such a dilution of services for all gifted children are great, and may put highly gifted children even more at risk than they already are.

Like all children, highly gifted children need developmentally appropriate educational experiences—developmentally appropriate *for them*, addressing their advanced rate of intellectual growth and the "asynchronous development" (Columbus Group, 1991) that often results. Such a curriculum may be far different from what is appropriate for the child's agemates. Doing what is right for these children takes work, it may ruffle feathers, it may be inconvenient and time consuming, and it may run squarely afoul of the political agendas of the day. But if we fail them, not only may their dreams be deferred, perhaps forever, but so may society's.

We who are advocates for these children—their parents, teachers, counselors, and friends—also have responsibilities.

•We must not give up our efforts on behalf of these children because of the current political or economic climate. Recessions come and go, and so do fads and trends in education. Sooner or later, the excesses of the school reform movement will be tempered by other voices and other ideas. But in the meantime, we stand to lose some of the finest minds of a generation, unless we are willing to continue to actively advocate for them.

•We must continue to conduct or to participate in research about these children and their families. "Oddly, perhaps inexplicably, the most extreme forms of intellectual giftedness have been the least studied" (Feldman, 1979, p. 335). So little is really known about these children. What is the range of "normal development" for the extraordinarily gifted child? What do they and their families really need? Unless more research is done, we will have only partial answers.

•We must create safe places, in our homes, in our schools, and in our lives, for these children who so often "don't fit" (Tolan, 1990, p. 2).

•We must hone the skills of self-reliance, creativity, and courage. Schools can take months to individualize a curriculum, and years to change. Meanwhile, children grow up. Much of what we need to do for highly gifted children may well take place outside, or at the edges of, conventional systems and institutions, until those institutions

begin to understand the needs of these children and are willing to adapt their policies and procedures.

•We must seriously consider introducing federal legislation which would extend to gifted children the right to a free and appropriate public education. The "double whammy" of fiscal recession and current political and educational trends has meant that many gifted education programs across the nation have been summarily cut. Worse, many other administrative arrangements which are effective with the gifted and are centered in the regular classroom, including ability grouping, cluster grouping, and acceleration, are now considered politically off limits by educational policymakers. If gifted children had the same protection for their education which is extended to all other exceptional children, such a thing could not have happened.

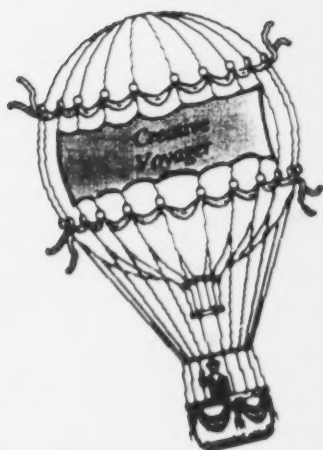
A dream deferred, as Langston Hughes (1974) so eloquently described, can also explode—in anger, in poverty, in suicide, and in the quiet acquiescence of the child who discovers early that hiding an extraordinary talent is far safer than developing it. Our society cannot afford to defer the education of an entire generation of extraordinary minds.

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Kathi Kearney, M.A.Ed., is Director of the Hollingworth Center for Highly Gifted Children in Auburn, Maine, a doctoral candidate at Teachers College, Columbia University, and editor of *Highly Gifted Children*.

IN SEARCH OF SERENDIPITY



Creative

Ventures

And

Encounters

Jerry Flack

Tour Guide

Creating a Civilization

*Civilization is a movement
and not a condition,
a voyage and not a harbor.*
Arnold Toynbee

One of the favorite activities of gifted youth is the creation of imaginary worlds. Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, the literary Bronte sisters, and C. S. Lewis are but a few eminently gifted persons who spent long childhood hours creating their own imaginary civilizations. They gave each of their imagined civilizations art, histories, maps, and literature. Of course, adults are not immune from this favorite creative activity; witness the contemporary popularity of Garrison Keillor's "Lake Wobegon," Minnesota.

A creative outgrowth of students' studies of history, economics, geography, anthropology, government, science, and language arts can be the creation of an imaginary society. This activity can be a group activity, planned and executed in the classroom, or it can be an individual project completed chiefly by a gifted child or adolescent working at home.

Students should create a society with a clearly identified and articulated culture. Students are explorers who "discover" a previously unknown civilization. The culture of each student's civilization may be revealed through some grand adventure tale (e.g., *The Hobbit* or "Star Wars"), or through a quasi-scientific paper that an anthropologist might author for a scholarly ethnography journal. The projected society should be represented by many of the following traits found in a civilization.

*Heroes/Heroines • Architecture •
Classes of Society • Music •
Sports & Leisure • Belief System •
Tools • Products •
Barter or Money System • Art •
Work • Symbols • History •
Traditions • Holidays or Festivals*

Students may proceed to create their society in the following manner:

1. Give the civilization a name.
2. Create a map of the land inhabited by the society.
3. Create names for the cities, rivers, and mountains.
4. Describe the people of the society and tell how they were "discovered."
5. Explain how the society functions. What are the major forms of work? How is the society governed? Is there more than one class of people?
6. Describe at least one holiday, religious festival or feast.
7. Replicate the most stunning pieces of the society's art and architecture.
8. Retell one of the legends of the society's heroes or recount one of the society's greatest literary masterpieces.
9. Describe how the young in the society are educated.
10. Create a unique delivery system to communicate all of the above information about the existence of this civilization to the rest of the known world.

(Continued on page 18)

from
parent

to
parent

Everyone needs to belong somewhere. Every person needs to feel their contribution is valuable. Even the gifted. It's not enough to know that you can do or think remarkable things. Test scores provide insight but not validation. It is necessary that the products you can offer, whether it is a new idea or a revolutionary invention, are valued by others.

All social beings need the support of the larger community, including gifted children and adults. The community is not a single unit. It has a lot of little units, each of which may value different skills and talents differently. For the population of gifted children, it seems to be important that they sense the value of themselves, reflected by

- their school community
- their parents (their family community), or
- the community at large.

I have often thought that it is the children and adults who have the support of those three communities who can develop the confidence and self-assurance to take whatever life may dish out. When support is lacking in one area support in the other areas becomes more important. For example, in a school system or town that gives priority to athletics over academics, family support for intellectual gifts is even more important than otherwise. And if a family doesn't value education, the school system becomes the lifeline.

Creative Ventures (Continued)

Advise students that each of the component parts must be congruent with other traits and/or artifacts. For example, the artwork ascribed to the imaginary civilization must be able to be fashioned with the tools the people are said to possess.

Once all the individuals or teams have created their civilizations, a United Nations forum should be held, and each person or group should *creatively* reveal the civilization to the other students. Countless spinoffs then become creative classroom options. All of the cultures are going to be effected by the depletion of the ozone. How might the many civilization leaders rectify this alarming situation? In an open forum, a travel agent from

each civilization could entice vacationers to visit his or her utopia. Ask students to imagine that the history of one of the civilizations is a history of war and aggression. How can the remaining civilizations protect themselves without risking the start of a brand new war? How might conflict resolution techniques be utilized?

When students return to their Earth-bound classroom, the teacher might further the critical thinking of gifted students by asking them to analyze these pithy statements about civilizations:

Every civilization is, among other things, an arrangement for domesticating the passions and setting them to do useful work.

Aldous Huxley

Civilization is a limitless multiplication of unnecessary necessities.

Mark Twain

We are born princes and the civilizing process makes us frogs.

Eric Berne

Jerry Flack, Ph.D., is Associate Professor of Gifted Education at the University of Colorado, Colorado Springs, and author of *Inventing, Inventions and Inventors*.

I think this perspective is another way of explaining why the experience of gifted females is a risky one. Too little societal support combined with qualified family support puts all the eggs in the school basket.

Creating a supportive community for the development of giftedness requires a great deal of energy, but the rewards are immeasurable for the individual and for society.

Note: This will be the last column I contribute to Understanding Our Gifted. I hope that you got some worthwhile information and useful insights from my efforts. Lisa

Parent to Parent is your forum for sharing ideas with other parents of gifted children. We want to hear your story—what has worked, or not worked, for your family. Please send your name, address, and phone number to *Understanding Our Gifted*, P.O. Box 18268, Boulder, CO 80308-8268, and we will contact you for details.

Lisa Ferguson is from Haverhill, Massachusetts and the parent of highly gifted children.



ANTENNA

Current Developments in Gifted Education

Is it time for a new definition of giftedness?

It would be easy to respond with various clichés, such as "Don't reinvent the wheel," and "If it's not broke, don't fix it."

The Jacob K. Javits Gifted and Talented Students Education Act of 1988 defines gifted and talented students as "*children and youth who give evidence of high performance capability in areas such as intellectual, creative, artistic, or leadership capacity, or in specific academic fields, and who require services or activities not ordinarily provided by the school in order to fully develop such capabilities.*" This definition is virtually the same one that was used in Public Law 97-35, the Education Consolidation and Improvement Act of 1981.

We could accept the above clichés, concluding that because the same

definition has existed for so many years—and even received funding on occasion—it doesn't need to be changed. But my mind rejects this "easy chair" non-active rationalization. I can no longer tolerate a definition of gifted children that speaks exclusively to achievement.

I have shared the pain of too many highly intelligent students who stand outside the school-based conception of giftedness. I have cried with them and for them as the very characteristics that comprise their uniqueness are so misunderstood in a traditional educational system.

Having big minds in little bodies marks these children as different from their peers, and they are aware of this differentness all the time. We're in a better position to help them if we, too, are aware of their inner struggles.

Yes, it is time to adopt a new definition of giftedness. It is time to

look inside our high ability children and understand the implications of their advanced development. Martha J. Morelock's lead article, "*Giftedness: The View from Within*," has done just that.

Morelock's enlightening view of giftedness places the achievement factor in its proper perspective. Recognizing the impact of "asynchronous" or uneven development enables us to know what actually makes the gifted tick!

In keeping with our dedication to helping gifted children reach their full potential, *Understanding Our Gifted* is proud to re-emphasize a philosophy that has been endorsed by educators and parents worldwide. We would like to add your voice to that dedication.

Dorothy Knopper is a private consultant on gifted education in Colorado and the publisher of *Understanding Our Gifted*.

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Annemarie and George Roeper recently lost their home in the Oakland fire, and with it, all addresses and letters. Their new address is 1200 Lakeshore Avenue, Apt. 4A, Oakland, CA 94606 (510) 763-3173. Annemarie is concerned that she has been unable to answer your correspondence, so please get in touch with her again. Since all of her unpublished work has been destroyed, we would be grateful for any assistance that might be offered to help her carry on her important work in the area of global awareness.

Advanced Development: *Journal on Adult Giftedness*

Advanced Development, the first journal on adult giftedness, focuses on inner development rather than achievement. Volume 4 on "The Self" is now available. The featured theorist is Roberto Assagioli and the moral exemplar is Peace Pilgrim. One-third larger than previous issues, this volume is packed with articles that will inspire you. (\$20 for individuals; \$30 for institutions.) See the order form on page 15 or contact ISAD, 777 Pearl St., Denver, CO 80203 (303) 837-8378.

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"High Potential At Risk" is the theme for the next conference of the Association for the Education of Gifted Underachieving Students (AEGUS) to be held in New Rochelle/New York City, May 15-16. For more information, contact F. Richard Olenchak, Ph.D. (205) 348-7340.

Sixth Annual Conference on the Highly Gifted

The Hollingworth Center for Highly Gifted Children is sponsoring its sixth annual conference in Portland, Maine, May 15-17. For information contact the Center at P.O. Box 464, South Cosco, Maine 04077 (207) 655-3767 or call Marcia Greason (207) 647-5130.

FOCUS: ASSESSING THE GIFTED

DON'T THROW AWAY THE OLD BINET

Kathi Kearney, M.A.Ed.
& Linda Silverman, Ph.D.

DISCOVERING HIGHLY GIFTED STUDENTS

Jan B. Hansen, Ph.D.

*Vision without action
is just a dream.*

*Action without vision
just passes the time.*

*Vision **with** action
can change the world!*

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

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March—April, 1992

Volume 4, Issue 4

Don't Throw Away the Old Binet

Linda Silverman, Ph.D.
Katheryn Kearney, M.A., Ed.

The *Stanford-Binet Intelligence Scale (Form L-M)* is the only measurement tool that can adequately assess extraordinarily gifted children; yet, it is in danger of extinction. Newer tests, newer conceptions of intelligence, and newer normative samples make the "old Binet" appear hopelessly antiquated. Among the misunderstandings about testing is the widely held belief that *newer is better*, with no consideration of the fact that a test may be better for some populations but not for others. In this article, we will discuss the deficits of the old Binet as well as its strengths, problems with the use of newer instruments for the exceptionally gifted population, and recommendations for when it is advisable to administer the *Binet L-M*.

Why We Need the Old Binet

Before those of you who are knowledgeable about testing begin, "But the L-M is so..." we hasten to assure you that we are well aware of myriad flaws in the old Binet: it is sexist, morbid, outdated; men no longer make \$20 per week; it uses terms that children no longer hear and describes experiences children no longer have; it has 20-year-old norms; it is highly verbal; it generates only one

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FOCUS ON:

ASSESSING THE GIFTED

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Discovering Highly Gifted Students

Jan B. Hansen, Ph.D.

The principle reason for identifying highly gifted children is to help them get a better education than they probably would get otherwise. Tests designed for age-peers are powerless in yielding information to meet this end. One effective method of discovering highly gifted students is by above-level testing. This article focuses on forms of above-level testing with emphasis on the talent search model. Guidelines for above-level testing are offered.

Above-Level Testing

Dr. Leta Stetter Hollingworth first introduced above-level testing in 1916 when she tested "Child E" on the original *Stanford-Binet Intelligence Scale* (Terman's revision of the *Binet-Simon Scale*). "The Binet-type scale might be considered the original examination suitable for extensive out-of-level testing" (Stanley, 1990, p.167). Although Child E was 8 years 4 months at the time of testing, he breezed through all of the tests intended for 12-year-old children. He then proceeded to earn 27 more months of mental age credit at the 14-year, Adult and Superior Adult levels. Given the relative ease with which Child E responded to items

(Continued on page 11)



FROM THE EDITOR

I am delighted to welcome to our staff, Mary Lynn Baum, of Vancouver, British Columbia, who is lending her linguistic talents to our "Parent to Parent" column. Thanks for adding an international perspective to *Understanding Our Gifted*, Mary Lynn. We will miss Lisa Ferguson, who produces our sister publication, *Highly Gifted Children*, which we highly recommend.

This issue is particularly important to the field of gifted education. There is so much misinformation floating around about IQ testing that parents and professionals alike are completely confused. The phone call I received from a dismayed parent sums up the situation. School-based assessments indicated that her gifted dyslexic daughter's IQ was 30 points lower than scores obtained earlier by two different psychologists. The assistant principal dismissed the earlier scores with: "I can explain it perfectly well. Caitlin has finally grown into her TRUE IQ. The only reason her IQ was higher 3 years ago was because she had early childhood enrichment in the home."

Unfortunately, this attitude about early IQ scores is quite common. I met with 4 families last week of children who scored beyond 190 IQ, all of whom had been told that their children's high IQ scores occurred simply because they were "young" and that they would eventually level off. (The corollary of this myth is, "The other children will eventually catch up.") All of these statements are based upon misunderstandings about testing, and assumptions that I believe can be shown to be sexist.

Some Logic: Who has had more environmental stimulation, the 4 year old or the 9 year old? Whose score is more likely to be a product of environmental enrichment: the 4 year old's or the 9 year old's? What sense does it make to dismiss the early scores on the basis of "early childhood enrichment" when older students have had *more* enrichment?

If IQ scores of 190+ occur simply because a child is "young" or "enriched," why don't all young, enriched children get those scores? Who is most likely to *blend in* with the other children, appear to "level off," and hide her abilities for social reasons? Who are all those early readers who by third grade just don't act gifted anymore? Who is the most likely candidate for the label, "overachiever"? Gifted Girls.

The kill-the-IQ-test movement may be "politically correct" for some, but early assessments may be our only way of finding gifted girls, who appear average in order to fit in; our only way of finding underachievers who need our help; our only way of finding gifted children with learning disabilities; and, as this issue points out, our only way of differentiating the highly gifted. Aren't any of these groups important? It's time we took a serious look at the value of IQ testing before we eliminate the only tool available to us to find many groups of hidden gifted learners.

Linda Silverman

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Publisher

Dorothy Knopper

Editor

Dr. Linda Kreger Silverman

Cartoonist

Linda Leviton

Column Editors

Mary Lynn Baum, *Parent, Vancouver, British Columbia*

Dorothy Knopper, *Private Consultant for the Gifted, Boulder, Colorado*

Dr. Deirdre Lovecky, *Clinical Psychologist, Providence, Rhode Island*

Dr. Suzanne Perry, *Principal, Aurora Public Schools, Aurora, Colorado*

Dr. Karen C. Nelson, *Emporia State University, Emporia, Kansas*

Stephanie Tolan, *Author and Consultant, Columbus, Ohio*

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HIDDEN GIFTED LEARNER

The Exceptionally Gifted Child



In the movie, "Little Man Tate," the main character, Fred, is extraordinarily gifted. He paints, writes poetry, composes music and is a math prodigy. There are few real life Freds even among extraordinarily gifted children because few are so prodigious in so many areas. Even throughout history such genius is rare. Probably Leonardo da Vinci and John Stuart Mill were two such children. In the movie no one doubted Fred's talents, but in real life, all too often such talents are denied.

For example, Jim¹ did no work in 1st or 2nd grade. Though he read at 8th grade level, he was placed in a regular 2nd grade reader. Work given Jim consisted of many workbook pages of beginning reading and math activities. When Jim was finally tested, he scored over 200 IQ on the *Stanford-Binet Intelligence Scale (Form L-M)*, was reading at high school level with math skills at junior high levels. Only when these scores were discussed with the school were they willing to start to think of Jim as an exceptional, but bored, boy whose special needs could not be met by a traditional 2nd grade program. Other Jims are less lucky. In their school systems, no matter how high their scores, there is no deviation from the standard curriculum permitted. The only alternatives for these children are finding more flexible alternative schools or home education.

Some exceptionally gifted children (those who score above 170 IQ) are not recognized easily. Though their early histories might indicate precocious development in such milestones

as very early talking and reading, their school achievement may in no way mark them as different from others; such students may be "in hiding." This is particularly the case with exceptionally gifted girls who may not ask for special work, nor complain that they are bored. Many gifted girls tend to conform to what they see as expected performance, even copying the behavior of peers.

Martha, in fact, watched closely to see what she thought adults wanted from her, and then behaved in this manner. When she came for her initial visit, she watched the psychologist to see what she was expected to do. Noticing that the examiner was standing closest to the dolls, Martha played with these. Later, the examiner moved closest to the lego sets, and Martha played with them. One of the major considerations for her school was that she never acted gifted, and mostly appeared quite happy playing with age peers. It is much easier to convince people of the necessity of doing something for an obviously unhappy Fred Tate looking wistfully at other kids while drawing masterpieces on the cement than it is to convince people that a happy looking Martha playing with age peers isn't having her needs met.

In identifying the Jims, Freds and Marthas using material that truly assesses their level of potential is necessary. Most tests of intellectual potential have ceiling effects that artificially lower scores of the highest scoring children: the *Stanford-Binet (Form L-M)* is the only instrument that adequately assesses intellectual

potential for this population. Since the *Stanford-Binet* has been revised as the *Fourth Edition*, some school psychologists and other evaluators think the L-M is now outdated and "unethical" to use. However, a recent revision of the *Ethical Standards for Psychologists* by the American Psychological Association suggests that this is not the case for populations for which there is no other adequate measure (Stanley E. Jones, APA Office of Ethics, personal communication, November 26, 1991).

In addition to their many differences from average children, exceptionally gifted children are also different from other gifted children. Programs and enrichment activities that interest gifted children with IQs in the 125 to 150 range may not be very useful or effective for the exceptionally gifted. This is due to differences in both degree and type of advancement.

How do exceptionally gifted children differ from other gifted children? **An extreme need for constant mental stimulation is one important difference.** In contrast to gifted children with IQ scores between 130 and 150, exceptionally gifted children have minds that never turn off. Isaac Asimov (1990, p. 140), author of over 400 books, has described his need for stimulation as so pressing that he counts the holes in acoustic ceiling tiles. Many exceptionally gifted children have trouble sleeping at night because their minds do not shut off enough for sleep to come. Others exhibit behavior problems that develop from needing more stimula-

tion than they are receiving. George, age 5, with an IQ close to 200, became extremely attached to Nintendo since it was the only activity in his life that provided enough mental challenge. However, he also began to exhibit the aggressive behaviors and violent solutions to problems that Nintendo teaches. Computer hacking and *Dungeons and Dragons* are activities often used by the gifted to fill this need.

Concentration can be a problem for exceptionally gifted children when material does not offer sufficient intellectual stimulation. This was what Jim encountered in first grade when required to complete workbook pages. In effect he could not do the task. It was not that Jim was uncooperative or refused to try; in fact, Jim very much wanted to please the teacher. Yet, every time he started a page of problems, he would find himself in trouble for not working. Jim's brain could not work with the material offered, and his mind would not focus on the task. Given material at his level, Jim had no trouble with concentration or completing tasks. Tolan (1985) presents other examples of this same issue.

The thought processes of extraordinarily gifted children tend to be more complex than those of other gifted children. They not only see solutions to problems instantaneously, skipping many of the steps others use to arrive at answers, but they evolve whole new conceptions. Feldman (1986) describes one such youngster who, starting at the age of 22 months, learned foreign languages in several language groups in order to discover whether there was a parent language. Once he found the solution to the problem he had set for himself (which occurred when he was about 4), he went on to another problem and was not interested in learning other new languages. The more typical gifted child may be interested in learning languages at a later age, but could not conceive of such a problem.

Exceptionally gifted children discuss complex issues at a much earlier age than would be expected. They may ask questions or think about issues related to the origins of things: "How did time start?" "Does time start anew with the start of a new galaxy?" "What is the purpose of religion?" Austin, at age 8, speculated on the origins of black holes, including their cosmological purpose and how they fit into the various points of view of cosmology held by different religions.

There is often an unusually early grasp of the essential element of an issue. Thus, in answering questions, the exceptionally gifted child can understand why something is or is not true at an age when other gifted children accumulate facts drawn from authority. The exceptionally gifted seven year old might find the teacher's explanation of subtraction both confusing and inaccurate since he knows about equivalency and negative numbers, concepts that others his age have not yet learned.

Exceptionally gifted children usually show early and unusual perceptiveness about issues and other people. In the movie, Fred Tate is able to explain why there is only one white iris in Van Gogh's painting of irises: It's lonely. Melody, age 11, wrote a scathing parody of state and national policies on homelessness using the 23rd Psalm as her basis. None of her classmates and few of her teachers understood the irony involved.

Because of their different way of experiencing the world, and their vastly different way of learning, both faster and with greater complexity than other gifted children, exceptionally gifted children need different educational experiences. Given the usual academic fare for their age group, such children spend their time counting the holes in acoustic ceiling tiles, playing Nintendo and daydreaming while their self esteem, motivation

and even eventually their ability to concentrate and meet challenges deteriorate.

There is no one program that will suit all exceptionally gifted children. However, certain commonalities exist including the need for a high degree of mental stimulation, increased complexity in both material to be studied and in the responses given by the children, and exploration of topics in depth and for prolonged periods, sometimes without a defined goal in mind. For example, the two year old described by Feldman (1986) who decided to study all those languages to determine the parent language did not mention his goal to adults. Were he subsequently forced to continue learning languages beyond his need to do so because he had an obvious talent for them, his ability to learn other skills and his joy in learning might have been destroyed. Thus, mentoring and support from adults while particularly needed for exceptionally gifted children, also have to be undertaken carefully so as to not remove their power to determine the future course of study. Undermining gifted children's initiative, whether through forced participation in grade level curriculum, adult generated projects or too rigid an environment, produces a real loss in terms of potential that may not ever be recovered.

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¹ Jim, and the other examples described in this paper are composites of several children. All details are disguised to preserve confidentiality. In no case is any example exactly like any real child seen in my practice.

Deirdre V. Lovecky, Ph.D., is a licensed clinical psychologist in private practice in Providence, RI, a poet, and a frequent author of articles on giftedness in children and adults.

PARENTING

Whose Problem Is It?

Lisa is now seven years old. Lisa's parents tried hard to find the best school for their gifted little girl and they feel successful. Her teacher is friendly and runs a relaxed, flexible, interesting classroom. But, imperceptibly, something had changed between Lisa and her parents. It seemed that they were fighting every day.

"It will take you just a few minutes to do your homework, Lisa." Lisa's face reddened and she ran crying out of the room. Her parents looked at each other, puzzled. As was their habit, they tried to analyze the situation. Something like this happened almost every day in the last few months. Only on weekends Lisa appeared to be her usual smiling self. What caused the change?

"Let's talk to her about it," suggested her father. They went to her room and heard her sobbing through the door. They held her until she quieted down and then asked what she thought the trouble was.

"The homework is so boring! I've done those subtractions for two years. Why do I have to do two boring, boring pages of the same old thing?"

"I know it's boring," replied her father, "but the teacher wants everybody to do it."

"I might as well call her 'Mommy'," Lisa cried.

"What do you mean?" asked her mother, startled.

"You used to take care of me and try to help me grow. I went to bed even if I didn't feel like it because you said I needed my sleep and I knew you were right. Now you say you know my homework is boring but you make me do it anyway—not

because I need it but because the teacher says so. You don't even think it's good for me. You don't help me any more. You just obey the teacher. I feel so alone."

Lisa's parents looked at each other in astonishment. She was right. In a strange way they had abandoned their child. All three of them hugged each other and Lisa felt as though a stone had been lifted from her chest.

Most of the children I see in my consultation service for the gifted are about seven or eight years old. They come because there is trouble at school. *"My child is a dreamer."* *"My child has problems paying attention."* *"My child is the clown."* *"My child talks too much."* *"My child throws paper."* *"My child makes noises."* *"Something is wrong with him."* *"What mistakes have I made?"* *"Problems started when she started grade school."*

Something is wrong, but not necessarily with the child. Something may be wrong with the situation, the expectations, the contents of the daily activities. Parents of the gifted must not immediately look for problems in the child. The problem may be the environment, even one that is considered a good one. Parents must look carefully at the situation and become advocates for their children.

The school does not always know best and parents *can* make an impact. Advocacy begins at home. Children must feel that their parents are on their side. Frequently gifted children's needs are not met by the existing program and structure. The expectations may not be appropriate. Even a good school may not be geared to the needs of a particular gifted child.

What is the next step once we find that to be true? Try the cooperative approach. Many administrators and teachers are willing to work with

parents and the child once they understand that there is a problem. Some educators feel that the child must learn to adjust, but adjustment must go

both ways. Schools exist for children—not the other way around. Much of my work consists in creating mutual understanding between the school and the parents. It often works, but not always. *(Actually, there is a need for a new profession, that of the ombudsman for the gifted.)*

When it becomes apparent that the situation cannot accommodate the needs of a particular child, one might need to look for a different school environment or consider home-schooling. It may be necessary to continue with the present situation until new plans can be made. In the meantime, the child may have to contend with the situation, but it is most important that she or he feels the support of the parents. Knowing that they are trying to solve the problem and do not put the blame on the child is a great relief for the child. No one should be blamed: A problem should be recognized and solved by all involved.

If you have a concern about your child's educational environment, please feel free to write to me or even call. I might be able to be of help.

Dr. Annemarie Roeper is a consultant on the gifted in Oakland, CA, and author of *Educating Children for Life*. Co-founder of the Roeper City and Country School and the *Roeper Review*, Annemarie has inspired a worldwide focus on global awareness in gifted education.





INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES

Karen C. Nelson

Self-Assessment for the Gifted

An affective education component is an indispensable element of curriculum planning for gifted students. *The Gifted Kids Survival Guides* (Delisle & Galbraith, 1977; Galbraith, 1983, 1989) from Free Spirit Press are basic tools suitable for orientation to a gifted program. They introduce gifted kids to identity issues of this group including school and peer adjustment. Specific topics include: what it means to be gifted; how to deal with boredom in school; feeling different; teasing from peers; pressure who really understand you; pressure from teachers, peers and parents.

Parents learn how to "understand, live with and stick up for your gifted child" (Walker, 1991, p.1) in *The Survival Guide for Parents of Gifted Kids*. A companion to the kids' *Survival Guides*, this volume is a good one for schools to share with parents at the time their children are identified for gifted programming. Specific topics include: living with your gifted child; coping with problems; making school better for your child; and advocacy at local and state levels.

The Survival Guides provide a good introduction to affective dimensions of

giftedness. As a second step in addressing affective needs of gifted students, the process of self assessment can be guided by another recent publication from Free Spirit, *Psychology for Kids*—subtitled *40 Fun Tests That Help You Learn About Yourself* (Kincher, 1990).

This book offers an introduction to psychology by means of 40 Personal Style Inventories (PSI's) suitable for age 10 and up. The basis of the book is the definition of psychology as the study of human thoughts, feelings, and behaviors and the idea that psychology provides tools for self knowledge that can lead to personal freedom.

Personal style is defined as "a person's attitudes, opinions, beliefs, habits, choices, memories, ideas, feelings, and abilities" (Kincher, 1990, p.1).

The process of personal exploration begins with several attitude surveys, such as:

- Are You an Optimist or a Pessimist?
- Are You an Introvert or an Extravert?
- Do You Think in Stereotypes?

Other sections cover Your Feelings, Your Social Styles, Your Creative Styles, Your Thinking Styles, Your Learning Styles and Special Styles (which include special abilities like photographic memory, ESP, and future thinking).

Most of the inventories are short quizzes apparently developed by the

author; a few items discuss standard instruments like the Rorschach and the MMPI. One of the nice features of the book is a section on *How To Make Up Your Own Personality Tests*, which explains how to establish validity and advises,

Making up your own tests should give you insight into how test-makers think—and help you when you study for your next school or aptitude test. (p. 11)

Psychology for Kids, unlike the *Survival Guides*, is not specifically for the gifted. However, all the traits inventoried are suitable for the gifted. The book would be a suitable unit for classes including students who are not gifted. Individual PSI's (*How Inventive Are You?* or *Are You a Critical Thinker?*) could be used by individuals working on an independent basis to develop a profile of personal style.

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Karen C. Nelson, Ph.D., is Coordinator of the graduate program in gifted education at Emporia State University in Kansas. She has been a public school teacher, curriculum editor, writer and poet.

THE READING ROOM

No one we know within the gifted movement is an advocate of censorship. But in the Reading Room this visit we focus on *I Hate Being Gifted*, by Patricia Hermes, a book which has given some their first taste of the book banning impulse. A number of female advocates for the gifted *hate* this book.

In many of her novels Patricia Hermes writes vividly of the struggles of preteen girls for acceptance, friendship, and popularity as they take their first wobbling steps toward an independent identity. The kids in her books are seldom noble, courageous, heroic. They are just kids, trying to find a place for themselves in a difficult social world of taunts and namecalling, where one pays a heavy price for being different. In her first book, *What If They Knew?*, that difference is epilepsy. In this book the painful difference is a gifted mind.

Sixth grade is about to begin for KT. The good news is that she'll be in the same class as Melinda and Chrissy, her best friends. The bad news is that she has passed the test for LEAP, her school's gifted program. (No explanation is given of why she wasn't tested for it earlier.) LEAP will take her out of the regular classroom, away from Melinda and Chrissy, three afternoons a week. Besides, it classifies her as a "LEAP Creep."

When her psychiatrist parents won't let her out of the program—"it's an honor"—she fights to maintain her old friendships in spite of LEAP. To do this she must compete with Erica, the jealous girl who claims to have

purposely failed the LEAP test and who starts a club that shuts out LEAP Creeps.

Indeed, some of the LEAP kids are creeps, or *dorks* or *nerds*, the other terms used by KT et al. Nancy always knows—and gives—the right answers and brags incessantly; Conrad, the computer freak, slouches along near the wall as if he were "a cockroach...afraid that someone would swat him if he came out in the open"; Jessica is new and shy and quiet. Stereotypes all. Only cute Tony with the punky hair might be a "good thing" about LEAP.

It's easy to see why this book is hated. It punches all our buttons. But it also deals with feelings and situations that are real. Some gifted girls would choose friendship over intellectual challenge; and it's *hard* to be shunned and called names. We don't want girls to feel like KT, but those who do need to see that they aren't alone.

Read on. By the end KT has learned to evaluate friendship in a new way, jealous Erica has been exposed, and KT *chooses* to stay in LEAP. True, she is no heroic role model for gifted girls. But she hangs in there, finally, mind and all. Discuss this book, don't ban it!

Now for a quick side trip to the movie theatre.

Disney's *Beauty and the Beast* is a must see. Belle, the beauty, is actually a gifted girl! She reads. The townspeople think her weird. She has no one to talk to. She turns down the gorgeous, brainless hunk's proposal. And she makes the moral choice to trade her freedom for her inventor father's. *Here* is a role model. Take your gifted girls (and boys) or go alone and enjoy!



Stephanie Tolan, from Columbus, Ohio, is a noted author of children's books and one of the authors of the award-winning book, *Guiding the Gifted Child*.



global IQ score; specific strengths and weaknesses cannot be compared easily; it is not user-friendly, etc. So why bother?

We bother because it is all that we have. We have worked with over 200 children who test above 160 IQ on the *Stanford-Binet (L-M)*. Some of them were misunderstood by both their families and communities and assigned to totally inappropriate school placements until they were assessed appropriately and found to be exceptionally gifted and out of place. It has been key for both the family and the school to realize how gifted these children really are, and how different they are from their chronological age-peers and even from other, more moderately gifted children.

Within the top 1% of the IQ distribution, then, there is at least as much spread of talent as there is in the entire range from 1st to 99th percentile. Moreover, those we might call the "supergifted," (those with IQs 4 or more standard deviations above the mean) tend to be as unlike the "garden-variety gifted" (with IQs 2 or 3 standard deviations above the mean) as the "garden-variety gifted" are unlike children with scores clustered within 1 standard deviation of the mean of the population. (Robinson, 1981, p. 71)

Further, Robinson points out "that there are many more truly exceptional young children in the population than would be predicted on the basis of the normal curve alone" (p. 73) and that children in the very highest ranges of intelligence "may not fare as well in many respects as those with more moderate gifts" (p. 75). Without the tools to find such children, the children themselves remain doubly at risk. Nothing has come along to replace the *Stanford-Binet (L-M)* for this particular population. We eagerly greeted every recently released new test and revisions of the old ones, hoping they would correct all the woeful aspects of the L-M, only to find that not one of them was designed with the highly gifted in mind.

Why? In order for the testing industry to survive, it must focus all of its energies on creating tests that are as culturally unbiased as possible, excellent diagnostic tools for learning disabilities and retardation, easy to administer and applicable to the majority of the school population so that they will be economically feasible to produce.

In constructing a cognitive abilities test you are always faced with constraints. You have to produce an instrument that will adequately appraise the full range of individual differences in a chronological age group from the very slowest level of development to the most rapid. At the same time, you have to produce an instrument that can be administered fairly easily and within a reasonable amount of time. The compromise is to produce an instrument that is most effective in the range of ± 4 s. d.'s: therefore you can't use tasks that are successfully completed by 99.99 percent of an age group or that are failed by 99.99 percent of an age group. In the construction of the Binet [Revision IV], I was working with some nonverbal items that could only be solved by children who were in classes for the gifted. You can't put items like that in an intelligence test because they aren't functional for a wide enough group. (Hagen, in Silverman, 1986, p. 171)

This helps to explain why newer tests, like the *Stanford-Binet: Fourth Edition* or the *WISC-III*, are inadequate for highly gifted children. When an item can be solved only by children enrolled in a gifted class, it is removed from the test. Differentiating exceptionally from moderately gifted children was never a goal of current test makers.

Deflation of Scores in the Gifted Range

We have been blithely going along using all of the newer instruments to make placement decisions about gifted

students without paying attention to the lack of representation of these students in the normative samples. Few studies of the gifted are reported in the technical manuals and no studies of the exceptionally gifted appear at all.

In order to fit IQ scores into the normal curve of distribution, the scores in the highest ranges have been systematically depressed for the last 2 decades (Silverman, 1989). There has been a loss of 31 IQ points in 31 years, almost 2 standard deviations of

intelligence. Scores in the gifted range dropped 10 to 14 points from the 1960 norms of the L-M to the 1972 norms. Another 13.5

Nothing has come along to replace the Stanford-Binet (L-M) for this particular population.

points on average were lost for moderately gifted children between the 1972 L-M norms and the 1986 norms of the *Stanford-Binet: Fourth Edition*. The *Fourth Edition* correlated closely with the *WISC-R* for children in the 116 range (surprisingly labeled "gifted" in the technical manual). The *WISC-III* manual reports that scores in the gifted range average 5 to 6 points lower than on the *WISC-R*. The average Full Scale score on the *WISC-III* of 38 children who were independently identified as gifted on other measures was 129, low enough to just miss the cut-off score for most gifted programs! "Five of these 38 children obtained FS [Full Scale] IQ scores less than 120 on the *WISC-III*" (*WISC-III Technical Manual*, p. 210). Instead of taking these losses seriously, the deflation is waved away in the technical manual in one sentence: "These differences are expected because the *WISC-III* norms are more contemporary than *WISC-R* norms" (*WISC-III Technical Manual*, p. 211).

However, the discrepancies cannot be explained simply in terms of the entire population getting brighter over time. The rise in intelligence in the general population is reflected in differences

in scores in the average range of only 8 or 9 IQ points during the same time period. Differences in the gifted range are more than 3 times the differences in the average range (Silverman, 1989), and even greater in the highly gifted range.

Seven of the children in the Maine group who had been tested on the WISC, WISC-R, WPPSI, or K-ABC intelligence tests scored between 139 and 155, with only two scoring above 145. They were then given the Stanford-Binet Intelligence Scale (Form L-M)...On this test, these same children scored between 169+ and 194. One child's score showed a discrepancy of more than 50 points between the K-ABC and the Stanford-Binet (143 as opposed to 194); another had a similar discrepancy between the WISC (139) and the Stanford-Binet L-M (187+). In the Colorado group...only one child in the 170+ range scored above 150 on the WISC-R, and another scored as low as 135. (Silverman & Kearney, 1989, pp. 47-48)

Disparities of this magnitude continue to be discovered. One child was found who scored 182 on the *Stanford-Binet (Form L-M)* and 127 on the *Stanford-Binet: Fourth Edition*. Another scored 187 on the *L-M* and 139 on the *WISC-III*. The most remarkable difference was a child who scored 137 on the *WISC-R*, and a year later tested 229+ on the *L-M*, at the age of nine missing only two items on the entire test!

This "test artifact" amounts to discrimination against the highly gifted, and has major implications for identification and placement of gifted students. The situation is alarming, but no one appears to be noticing because the highly gifted are not of central interest to test constructors. In contrast, the gifted and highly gifted were definitely important to Lewis Terman, who constructed the original *Stanford-Binet*. Terman planned to use the test to find potential "geniuses," so he created a difficult examination with a high enough ceiling to permit their discovery.

The Structure of the Old Binet

Terman's *Stanford-Binet* was constructed in a different manner from current tests. Tasks are organized by age level from ages 2 to 14, with four additional adult levels culminating in the Superior Adult III level. The items at each age level are organized to tap different mental processes and to assess the child's flexibility in going from one type of task to another. By comparison, the Wechsler tests, the *Stanford-Binet: Fourth Edition*, and the *Kaufman Assessment Battery for Children (K-ABC)* are all organized in subtests. The child stays with one type of item until he or she reaches a ceiling (cannot accurately complete a certain consecutive number of questions). The rapid movement from one kind of task to another in the old Binet appears to keep children interested in the assessment, and, therefore, likely to do their best. Vernon (1987) notes that

Certainly tests of the Wechsler type have many advantages, but I believe that a strong case can still be made for retaining the L-M, with its apparently haphazard arrangement of items, since it gives the tester greater flexibility...the shortness of the Binet items and their great variations in content help the tester to catch and hold the child's attention. (p. 253)

The *Stanford-Binet (Form L-M)* provides mental ages, which are no longer used in modern testing. One reason they have been abandoned is that they appear derogatory and invalid when applied to the functioning of retarded children. However, mental ages help parents and teachers understand why gifted children are bored with the regular curriculum and why their friends are often several years older. In addition, the mental age permits the extrapolation of both deviation and ratio IQs for the highly gifted range, which cannot be done with the newer tests.

Paradoxically, the *Binet (L-M)* honors multiple intelligences better than its successors. Even though it produces a global IQ score, a child can attain the very highest level of the test on *one or two skills alone*, such as vocabulary or verbal reasoning or spatial orientation. Test scores are not unduly affected by lack of fine motor coordination. All of the newer instruments that purport to be sensitive to different types of intelligence still produce composite or Full Scale scores which penalize children for every one of those intelligences that they do not demonstrate.

The most frequent complaint we have heard about the old Binet, ever since the *Stanford-Binet: Fourth Edition* was released in 1986, is that it has "outdated norms." Ironically, those who voiced this complaint continued comfortably using the *WISC-R*, even though the norms for the *WISC-R* were from 1974, only two years later than the 1972 norms for the *Binet (L-M)*.

Needs of Highly Gifted Children

Extremely gifted children and their families face unique and difficult academic, cultural, and social adjustment issues; indeed, this is a population that is truly "at risk" in many ways. There is little academic challenge for these children in contemporary American schools. Highly gifted children must deal early and continually with dramatic discrepancies in development, the long-term consequences of which we still do not understand very well. (See the last issue of *Understanding Our Gifted*). As early as 1930, Terman noted that "The child of 180 IQ has one of the most difficult problems of social adjustment that any human being is ever called upon to meet" (Burks, Jensen, & Terman, 1930, p. 265). It is safe to say that if any other special population of children was at risk in similar ways, we would use whatever effective tools were available in order

to identify them and provide appropriate services for them. For this particular population, an older tool (the *Stanford-Binet Form L-M*) is more effective than newer ones. In today's schools, assessment of the gifted is often done only as a means for entrance into a gifted program. For extraordinarily gifted children, it is important to take a much broader view of assessment, since the concomitants of extreme intellectual giftedness markedly affect individual development in all areas, and the entire family system as well.

Recommendations

Therefore, we recommend the following:

1. Entrance requirements for gifted programs should be lowered to 120 to take into account the lower norms on newer instruments.
2. Gifted children should be tested initially with one of the more recent tests (*Stanford-Binet: Fourth Edition*, *WISC-III*, or *K-ABC*) solely to meet whatever requirements exist at their schools for entrance into gifted education programs.
3. Whenever a child obtains three or more subtest scores at or near the ceiling of any current instrument (such as a 17, 18, or 19 on three or more *WISC-R* or *WISC-III* subtests), he or she should be retested on the *Stanford-Binet (Form L-M)*.
4. The *L-M* should also be administered as a supplemental test whenever there are marked discrepancies between strengths and weaknesses that might artificially depress the child's Full Scale IQ score.

In this case, the *L-M* is being used as a supplemental test to obtain further information about the child, and to tie that information to the 75-year research history regarding the extraordinarily gifted, which used this test and its predecessors extensively for identification. Using standard formulas (Pinneau, 1961), scores

should be extrapolated for any child who scores beyond the norms in the manual, in order to obtain a rough estimate of the child's ability.

One of the common criticisms of the *L-M* is that it is too "verbally loaded." Yet, for children whose greatest strength is their abstract and verbal reasoning ability, the *L-M* is the best measure to capture this strength in early childhood. Vernon (1987) states that

There are two special groups for whom the L-M is often preferable to the Wechsler scale: the potentially gifted who are being considered for special classes or enrichment programs, and severely retarded...children or adults. Neither the four verbal subtests in WISC or WAIS nor the four NS [Stanford-Binet: Fourth Edition] verbal subtests give as much opportunity as the L-M for gifted children to display their fluency, imagination, unusual or advanced concepts, and complex linguistic usage. (p. 256)

Use of the *Stanford-Binet (Form L-M)* enables appropriate intervention to be implemented in the critical early childhood and elementary years, providing a chance to avert academic and adjustment difficulties. It is best to administer the old Binet to children under the age of 12. Even at age 9, highly gifted children may surpass the ceiling on the *Binet L-M*, and a sufficient ceiling is necessary to capture the full strength of the child's abilities. When they are of middle school age, these students can be encouraged to participate in the national talent searches and take the SAT as an out-of-level test.

We need to share these recommendations with school psychologists so that the old Binet kits are not discarded. The release of the *WISC-III* last August places the *Stanford-Binet L-M* in even greater danger of disappearing. It must be preserved so that it can be used as a supplemental test for the highly gifted; otherwise, we have no assessment tools with the

range and sensitivity necessary to distinguish these children from their more moderately gifted peers.

Perhaps our best hope in saving the old Binet lies in the fact that it is also more accurate in identifying children in the moderately and severely retarded ranges. The newer tests have both lower ceilings and higher floors, making them appropriate for children closer to the mean. But when children veer 3 standard deviations from the mean in either direction, the newer tests are of limited value. Vernon (1987) recommended that "psychologists who wish to continue using the third edition (*Form L-M*) with 2-6 year olds, or with likely gifted children, should do so..." (p. 257). We concur, and urge readers to share this article with all those who might be in a position to save the *Stanford-Binet (Form L-M)* from extinction.

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Kathi Kearney, M.A.Ed., is Founder of the Hollingworth Center for Highly Gifted Children in South Casco, ME, and a doctoral candidate at Teachers College, Columbia University.

Linda Silverman, Ph.D., is a licensed psychologist and Director of the Gifted Child Development Center in Denver, Colorado.

on the adult tests, Hollingworth concluded that the test did not have enough ceiling to reflect his full abilities, and, therefore, that the IQ score of 187 was surely an underestimate (Garrison, Burke, & Hollingworth, 1917). She subsequently administered several college-level tests to Child E (and others), including the *Thorndike Mental Tests for Freshmen* used for entrance to Columbia University and the *Army Alpha Test*. Hollingworth was convinced of the need for above-level tests and continued to advocate their use with highly gifted children.

Ceiling Effects

As Hollingworth realized, the overriding obstacle in discovering highly gifted children through testing is the **ceiling effect**, operationally defined as the **clustering of scores at the upper limit of the test**. Group aptitude and achievements tests and some individual tests are simply too easy for highly gifted students. Ninety-ninth percentile scores on annual tests may please educators and parents, but they do not yield a true picture of the specific functioning of the child. For the highly gifted child, grade-level test scores tell only the percentage of students that performs below the individual but obscure what the child could have achieved had the test included appropriately difficult items. The problem is analogous to that of trying to measure the heights of 12 year old children using a measuring stick that is only 5 feet long. Many children can be measured using the stick, but we cannot differentiate among those who are 5 feet tall and those who are almost 7 feet tall (Stanley, 1990). The solution is to use a longer stick. With testing, the solution is to use an above-level test.

Ninety-ninth percentile scores on annual tests may please educators and parents, but they do not yield a true picture of the specific functioning of the child.

The Scholastic Aptitude Test

In 1971, inspired by the work of Leta Hollingworth, Julian Stanley initiated the concept of above-level testing on a national scale through the talent search model (Stanley, 1990). The *Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT)* used in the talent searches has become our most tried and true method of discovering highly gifted students at the junior and senior high school levels. In fact, for some highly gifted students trapped in grade-level curriculum, the SAT is the only vehicle that allows them to show their full range of abilities.

The purpose of the talent search programs is to discover extreme math and verbal abilities among junior high school students who "hit the ceiling" of an in-grade standardized achievement test; that is, those who score at or above the 97th (in some cases, 95th) percentile. The students then take the SAT (normally taken by college-bound juniors and seniors) as an above-level test to help determine levels of ability. The SAT, with its

high ceiling, is an effective test for highly gifted students, and plays a uniquely useful role. Even excep-

tionally gifted fifth and sixth grade students take the SAT in some locations (e.g., The University of Denver).

IQ Tests are not effective above middle school level due to ceiling effects, and the value of IQ scores seems to be misunderstood and disparaged. However, the SAT is usually perceived as yielding scores that translate into meaningful, relevant information regarding students' abilities. Math SAT's of 700, for example, mean eligibility for prestigious colleges and imply that the

pre-algebra sequence is inappropriate. In addition, the SAT Talent Search program may be well received because it is so huge and pervasive. Each January more than 100,000 seventh and eighth grade students in the United States take the SAT (and recently the ACT), and the program has also expanded internationally. It is an inexpensive way to assess large numbers of students. For these and other reasons, the SAT has become an accepted avenue for discovering older highly gifted students.

Because it is well-respected among educators, the SAT used as an above-level assessment remains a catalyst for educational change for identified students. When teachers are confronted with extremely high SAT scores, many are moved to reexamine the relevancy of their programs for gifted students. Gross (1989) reported that Adrian Seng, a highly gifted Australian boy, scored 760 on the *SAT-Mathematics (SAT-M)* at the age of 8 years 10 months. Appropriately, Adrian's school responded to this astounding score by designing a highly individualized program of subject acceleration, grade-skipping, curriculum compacting, and enrichment. In short, because school personnel believed Adrian's extreme *SAT-M* was credible, and reflected his extreme giftedness, Adrian was permitted to develop his immense abilities within a school program.

VanTassel-Baska (1986) showed the appropriateness of using the SAT as an above-level test, and as a diagnostic tool. The following table was adapted from tables presented in her article.

Table 1
Breakdown of SAT Score Ranges of Students Scoring in the
99th Percentile on In-Grade Achievement Tests

SAT-M Range	% Students Scoring	SAT-V Range	% Students Scoring
200-300	2%	200-300	6%
310-400	21%	310-400	39%
410-500	40%	410-500	40%
510-600	29%	510-600	13%
610-700	6%	610-700	2%
710-800	1%	710-800	.1%
	(Rounded)		(Rounded)

The SAT spreads the scores of students who appear to be at the same level, allowing finer discrimination of abilities at the high end. The 2% of students scoring 200-300 are substantially different in abilities and needs from the 1% scoring 710-800 on the SAT-M. We must remember that in-grade testing results tell us that this group of students is homogeneous, scoring at the 99th percentile, while above-level testing gives more specific information regarding the levels of individuals' intellectual talents.

It is not enough, however, to know a student's score. *The SAT, as with any other above-level test, should be used in order to plan program options that are difficult enough to be challenging and that enhance students' understanding of their own abilities.* VanTassel-Baska (1984) discussed program options based on ranges of performance on the SAT. Honors level work, enrichment seminars, and university summer programs were suggested for the 200-520 range. Individualized programming based on diagnostic-prescriptive approaches, early access to Advanced Placement Courses, grade acceleration and early college entrance were suggested for the 530-800 range. A more recent discussion of the curricular implications of talent search scores can be found in Cohn (1991).

In sum, the talent search model embodies important principles used to discover highly gifted students. The SAT testing is accepted by educators and is available to virtually all high achieving students.

Other Above-Level Tests

Unlike the talent searches where testing is used to help prescribe a wide variety of instructional provisions, the **Advanced Placement Program (AP)** uses a standard instructional provision (college-level coursework) to prepare advanced students for above-level tests. The college-level tests used in AP generally are difficult enough (have high enough ceilings) to yield diagnostic information regarding students' achievement levels in the areas tested. The long-term benefit is that students can earn early college credit on 24 exams in any one or more of five general disciplines. Although AP courses are often taught in secondary schools, some highly gifted students find particular benefit in enrolling in AP courses at the middle school level or through a correspondence program. For the highly gifted student, success in the AP program provides the flexibility that allows quicker entry into advanced courses in college or universities than is permitted generally.

The **College Level Examination Program (CLEP)** is a similar program with the unique advantage of obtaining college credits without enrolling in courses or correspondence programs. Students may take exams in five general areas and in 30 specific subjects. As with AP, each college decides which credits and the amount of credits it will award. CLEP is a wonderful way for highly gifted students who might find even the AP courses unchallenging to be tested on their knowledge and to gain some kind of meaningful credit for it.

It is important to recognize the role that these types of above-level tests play in determining appropriate educational plans. For example, Kay Bruce, a highly gifted girl from rural Minnesota, used CLEP to gain credit for many of the general requirements at her college. As a result, her first year at college was filled with the challenge of upper-level college courses. She completed her four-year degree in two years, and, at age 19, was happily contributing to society in her role as a professional social worker.

The **International Baccalaureate (IB)** program offers advantages similar to AP and CLEP with the unique advantage of its standards of achievement being accepted in higher institutions around the world. Many highly gifted students discover and develop their talents through this program of rigorous work and internationally standardized examinations.

Taking Action

Highly gifted students deserve rich and substantial educations commensurate with their advanced abilities. Locating highly gifted students is the first step on the path to sensible educational planning for them. The following guidelines are offered for using above-level tests to help discover highly gifted students.

Guidelines for Using Above-Level Testing

1. Follow sound general principles of measurement: Use tests with good reliability and validity.
2. Use tests that have sufficient ceilings. The *Stanford-Binet Intelligence Scale (Form L-M)* is the test of choice for highly gifted students (Silverman & Kearney, 1989). The most commonly accepted above-level test is the *Scholastic Aptitude Test: Mathematical and Verbal scales* (SAT-M and SAT-V). Other above-level tests include the *Raven's Advanced Progressive Matrices* (especially useful with many culturally diverse and non-English speaking groups), Advanced Placement examinations, the College Level Examination Program (CLEP), and the International Baccalaureate.
3. If tests with sufficient ceilings are unavailable, establish an appropriately high ceiling by using forms of tests intended for older students. The general rule is to retest at appropriate intervals until the student's score falls within two standard deviations of the mean of the test. For moderately gifted

children, use a form of the test intended for students one to two years older. For highly gifted students, use a form of the test at a sufficient level of difficulty as to yield diagnostic information.

4. Use aptitude or achievement test scores to help diagnose learning needs. Above-level testing can help discover highly gifted students, and more importantly, should help determine goals for learning.
5. Encourage testing service companies to offer supplements to user's manuals that would assist educators in administering tests and interpreting scores of gifted and highly gifted students (much as the supplements for special education students).
6. Collect qualitative data regarding students' achievements. There have been cases of phenomenal scores on standardized tests being the sole indicators of some underachieving highly gifted students. However, the use of portfolios, questionnaires, and interviews with parents and significant adults in children's lives have also proven useful in discovering highly gifted students. Through

observational information, educators can view a wide variety of achievements and behaviors indicating exceptional ability, when test scores are insufficient.

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Jan B. Hansen, Ph.D., is an educational consultant as well as instructor of graduate courses in gifted education at Purdue University.



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COMPARING DIFFERENT MEASURES OF INTELLIGENCE

Jerry S. Schecter, Ph.D.



The rapidly changing menu of psychological tests available for intellectual testing may be affecting the identification of gifted children and their selection into gifted programs. The following is a summary of a recently conducted study.

The Study

With the introduction of the new *Stanford-Binet Intelligence Scale: Fourth Edition (SB-IV)* concerns were raised about the comparability of this newer test with its predecessor, the *Stanford-Binet L-M (SB L-M)* and the effects of any discrepancies on the selection of children into a comprehensive gifted program at the elementary school level. Tyler-Wood and Carri (1991) compared 21 students on the following 4 measures: *SB L-M*, *SB-IV*, *Otis-Lennon School Abilities Test*, and the *Cognitive Abilities Test*, and found group mean differences of up to 13 points. An 8 point difference was found between the *SB L-M* and the *SB-IV* which was significant at the .05 level. A similar study was conducted by the Gifted Education Department of the Chicago Public Schools, in which 3 of the above 4 instruments were compared, and is described below.

The Regional Gifted Program, one of 9 program models in the Chicago Public Schools, is unique in that it provides a comprehensive, full time program to an ethnically diverse population on a city-wide basis. Essentially, as this is an equal access program, all children recommended by either their parents or kindergarten teacher were included in a pool of applicants that underwent screening via a group abilities test. In 1989 this

consisted of the *Otis-Lennon School Ability Test (Otis)*. Approximately 750 children were screened, and about 140 selected for 5 centers based on ranked scores and racial-ethnic guidelines.

Starting in 1987, and continuing for 3 years thereafter, a study was undertaken to determine the level and range of abilities of selected students in the incoming first grade classes. In 1989, two additional questions were asked in an attempt to evaluate the screening instrument as to its efficiency in selecting children. That is, how many of those selected would have been chosen had the *SB L-M* been used rather than the group measure (*Otis*)? Finally, how do the new and old Stanford-Binet tests compare when used as selection instruments (composite IQs only)? Both the *SB L-M* and the *SB-IV* were individually administered by school psychologists trained in their use. The *Otis* was administered in small groups (3-4 children per adult) by trained professionals, not necessarily school psychologists.

Results

The following is a summary of these results which looked at both the IQ scores of those selected and the differences between the scores of randomly selected children who were administered the 3 instruments (*SB L-M*, *SB-IV*, and the *Otis*).

A random stratified sample of 38 students was chosen for this study. These students mirrored the approximate percentages by race and ethnicity of the children in the program. Selected and agreeing to participate were 16 Caucasians, 11 African-Americans, 5 Asian-Americans, 5 Latin-Americans and 1 Native-American. While the *Otis* was administered to all applicants in the Spring of 1989, only those participating in the study were given the individually administered *Stanford-Binet* tests. Both the *SB L-M* and the *SB-IV* were administered during a 4 week period in the summer of 1989. The order in which these tests were given was counter-balanced. That is, one half of the subjects were administered the *SB L-M* first and one half were administered the *SB-IV* first. The group means for this sample (N=38) were as follows:

Table 1

Test	Mean
<i>Otis-Lennon</i>	116.58
<i>Stanford-Binet L-M</i>	129.31
<i>Stanford-Binet 4th Ed.</i>	121.05

Seven children (18%) in the sample failed to score 120 or better (the criterion measure for program eligibility based on one's score on the *SB L-M*). Four children scored 140+ on the *SB L-M* which equalled 11% of the sample and could be considered "highly gifted."

Table 2

Difference in Points Between Student Scores on the *SB L-M* and *SB-IV*

Point Difference	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
Students	1	4	4	1	1	1	4	2	1	2	0	2	1	0	2	0	2	3	1	5	1

Table 2 shows the frequency of students at each score difference. The number of children showing a 5 point or less difference between their total IQs was 12 or approximately 32% of the sample; the number of children showing a 6 to 9 point difference was 9 or approximately 24% of the sample; the number of children showing an 11 point or greater difference was 17 or approximately 45% of the sample. Of the 38 students, 32 (84%) scored higher on the *SB L-M* than on the *SB-IV*.

Conclusions

1. The *SB-IV* does not seem to be well correlated with its older sibling, the *SB L-M*. The 4th edition is generally much more conservative in identifying eligible students for gifted programming from an ethnically diverse population. However, one cannot simply add a fixed number of points to the *SB-IV* to come up with an equivalent score as the relationship between the two instruments is not that simple. About 16% of our sample scored higher on the *SB-IV* than on the *SB L-M*. Parents need to be aware of these differences, especially when school districts

change from one instrument to the other in their selection processes.

2. Parents and professionals should also be aware of the rather large differences that exist between the results obtained on group measures as compared with those obtained with individually administered standardized psychological tests (i.e., *Otis* vs. *SB L-M*). School districts, desiring to limit the size of their program to control costs may elect to emphasize group measures over individual tests. In such cases parents may wish to consult a licensed psychologist to obtain individual testing to assess the full strength of their children's abilities.
3. These results also support the findings of Tyler-Wood and Carrie (1991) in calling for the use of multiple measures in the selection of students for gifted programming. However, in using multiple measures one needs to be aware of how these measures are combined and whether the measures utilized add to the selection process. The combination of instruments ill suited to program goals or the use

of procedures which lack adequate reliability would only serve to make the identification process less accurate.

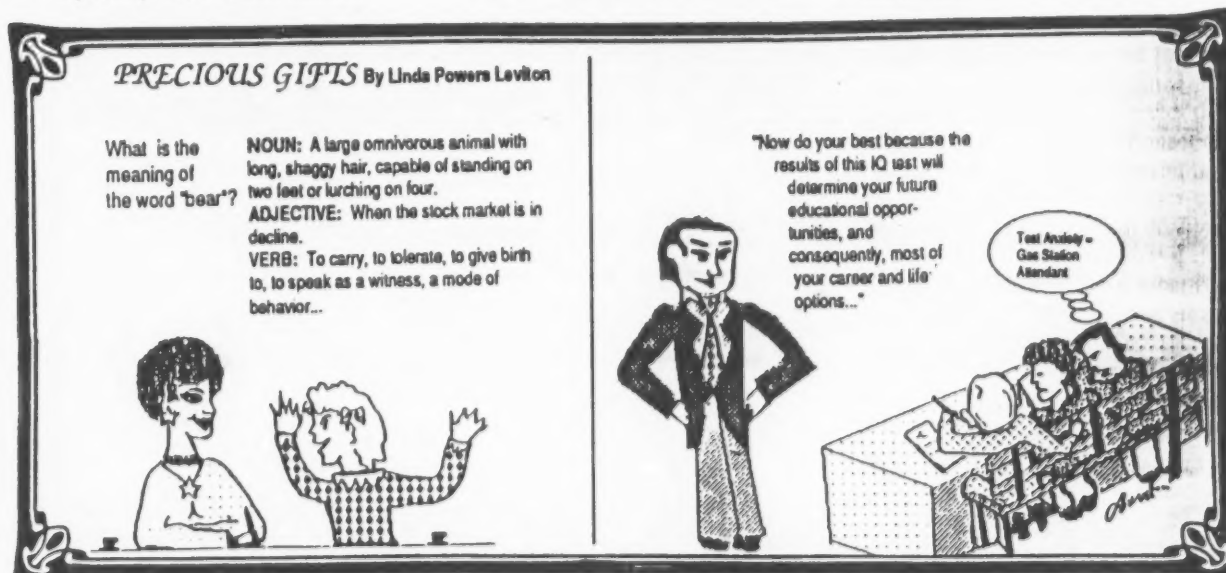
In summary, considerable differences exist between the *Otis*, *SB L-M*, and *SB-IV*, all instruments commonly used in the selection of children for gifted programs. The consumer of these services needs to be aware of how these differences affect the composition of students in gifted programs. The use of multiple measures for the selection of children has been widely recommended. One needs to be aware, however, of the possible problems in combining instruments and procedures.

Note: The following psychologists also participated in this study and were instrumental in its completion: Rosina Gallagher, Kathleen Griffin & Donna Scotti.

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Jerry Schecter, Ph.D., is a psychologist with the gifted program of the Chicago Public Schools. He is also in private practice in Skokie, Illinois, where he specializes in working with gifted children, adolescents, adults and their families.



From the Sublime... To the Ridiculous

KALEIDOSCOPE

Testing...For What Purpose?

Dr. Frankenstein learned full well what happens when an experiment goes awry. His benevolent creation became a monster, causing fear among all who came into contact with it. A great idea, mishandled, led to terror.

In many of today's schools, experiments of a different sort wreak havoc of a quieter, more personal nature. Testing—IQ, achievement, basic competency—can be used to locate gifted learners or misused as a way to displace children from educational services that challenge their talents.

Case in point: Carl, a fourth grade student. When tested recently on the WISC-R, Carl's Verbal IQ was 145. His Performance IQ, however, was "only" 112. This large discrepancy is significant and should have led educators and psychologists to probe further into Carl's talents and weaknesses. It should have been obvious from his Verbal score alone that he was highly gifted. Instead, Carl was merely found ineligible for his school's gifted program because his "Full Scale IQ" was 129—2 points shy of the arbitrarily determined cutoff of 131.

I don't pretend to know what causes underlie the vast difference in Carl's IQ subscores. However, I do know that his handwriting borders on being illegible and his drawings have a distinct resemblance to those done by five year olds. Still, I defy anyone to observe Carl for five minutes in an academic setting and not recognize his incredible verbal talents—talents which deserve to be addressed by academic programs that go beyond the regular curriculum content.

However, for Carl, there is "no room at the inn"; because his intellectual profile is erratic, he is denied placement in the very program that will challenge him most. Testing, in this case, turned out to be a disservice to Carl and his parents for it was used as a velvet bludgeon—a soft weapon of exclusion that carries an impact as powerful as anything ever invented in a mad scientist's lab.

What is the solution to this dilemma? Since Carl is only one among many thousands whose test score profiles are less than "clean," the implications for Carl apply to many others as well. Here are my suggestions:

- Test score results must begin to be seen as one piece—and one piece only—of the very complex puzzle of evaluating children. For too long, we have been enrapt with the magic of numbers. Now we must begin to listen to *people* who work with (or live with) children daily as a primary source of knowledge about a child's strengths.
- When discrepancies exist between test score data and observations of student performance by educators and parents, we must be willing to give "extra credit" to the viewpoints of these caregivers. In virtually every gifted program in this nation, "teacher nomination" is included in the identification process. But if these nominations are not "backed up" by the appropriate numbers, the nomination is often perceived as invalid. As the adage goes, "There is safety in numbers": however, there is also folly.



- One of the greatest gifts we can give our children is "the benefit of the doubt." If test score results point in one direction and observational data point in another, let us have the courage to err on the side of goodness—to give the child a chance to show whether or not a particular program is beneficial. The more common practice of excluding a child from a program, based upon test data alone, disallows that very opportunity.

Tests are valuable tools in the evaluation of student talents and weaknesses. They can be our greatest ally in locating hidden gifted learners, children with learning disabilities, or children who are both gifted and learning disabled. However, when they become so powerful that they take on lives of their own, when numbers replace judgment, when they are used to **exclude** children from needed services rather than to **include** them in programs, it is time for re-examination. Let us have the courage and the will to override the numbers when evidence from our own eyes and ears points in a different direction.

Jim Delisle is on leave from Kent State University, and is currently teaching fourth grade. He is the author of five books, including *Guiding the Social and Emotional Development of Gifted Youth* (Longman).

IN SEARCH OF SERENDIPITY



Creative

Ventures

And

Encounters

Jerry Flack

Tour Guide

Biography (Part I)

*The art of Biography
Is different from Geography.
Geography is about maps,
But Biography is about chaps.*

Edmund Clerihew Bently
Biography for Beginners

Of course, biography is about ladies as well as chaps, and it is a wonderful subject for gifted students. Happily, book stores today are filled with excellent biographies and autobiographies of both women and men of all races, ethnic groups, and nationalities. On this journey we will look at the value good biographies provide bright youth. Encounters with excellent biographies offer gifted students countless opportunities for important reflection. Biographies offer gifted youth both illumination and inspiration. Students can identify with others like Eleanor Roosevelt and Martin Luther King, Jr. who have known isolation and who have shared the feeling of "being different." They can be inspired by the heroic efforts and successes of individuals like Marie Curie and Thomas Edison who worked hard and long to achieve success. Biographies about gifted people at work increase the understanding young people have about history and both vocations and avocations. Biographies of Annie Oakley and Georgia O'Keeffe inform students about the colorful eras in which the subjects lived, while biographies of Sally Ride speak to careers in space science.

Biography also provides young people with a marvelous array of creative project possibilities. As a response to

their reading of outstanding biographies, students can generate first-rate creative projects to demonstrate their own learning and simultaneously enhance the learning of other students in their classrooms. The following are but a few starting points teachers and parents may wish to recommend.

Ask students and parents to jointly read a biography as a family project. Discussion of last night's reading will definitely spark exciting breakfast table conversation. Utilizing this approach allows students the opportunity to see their parent(s) modeling a positive behavior (i.e., reading rather than watching TV), and also allows students to have someone familiar close by with whom they can share ideas and ask relevant questions.

Three salutary things have occurred in juvenile biographies in recent years. First, the inexcusable dearth of biographies about women, especially in nontraditional roles, and minorities has largely been corrected. Second, many of the biographies penned today present their subjects free of the didactic hero worship so common in past biographies for children and adolescents. Subjects are presented as complete human beings who are capable of errors in judgment, making mistakes, and suffering defeats, as well as having life successes. A third

(Continued on page 18)

from
parent

to
parent

"Assessment is more than just a test score," writes Janet Ash of Richmond, B.C. "Meaningful interpretation depends on professionals who are sensitive to the inner world of gifted children, who understand them from the inside out."

Janet learned the hard way when her son, Mark, was tested by his school. "The psychologist refused to meet with me beforehand. He saw no relevance in anything I might tell him about my son. Afterwards he presented me with the results—a one page report with a one paragraph discussion. Although he confirmed that Mark was gifted, the psychologist made no recommendations about adjusting his academic program. His comments referred only to Mark's fidgeting during the testing, suggesting he had an attention deficit disorder.

Here was a child who at three would concentrate on a puzzle for half an hour, who had an encyclopedic knowledge of astronomy, who spent hours drawing maps of imaginary countries! This diagnosis made no sense." Janet therefore sought a second opinion from Dr. Joan Pinkus, a psychologist who works extensively with gifted children.

"That experience was totally different. Joan talked with me first for about an hour. We discussed Mark's childhood behaviors, what he did for fun, how he approached different kinds of learning tasks. She read reports from pre-school, which related his persistence in tasks that interested him.

"Following the testing, we discussed Joan's thorough, detailed report. Mark's scores were consistent with the

earlier testing, but her interpretation was completely different, focusing on the nature of his abilities and specific things we and the school could do to accommodate them.

"I can't stress enough how important it is to find a knowledgeable psychologist, one experienced in working with gifted children," Janet concludes. "While it may not be possible to find a specialist, some school psychologists now have background in giftedness. What's critical is that the person assessing your child understand both the attributes and the needs of gifted children."

Mary Lynn Baum is past president of the Gifted Children Association of British Columbia, Canada, and parent of a highly gifted son.

Creative Ventures (Continued)

feature of contemporary biography that is notable is the scholarship modeling of the authors that is presented to young readers through their works.

Exemplary works that demonstrate these benefits include Russell Freedman's *Lincoln: A Photobiography*. Freedman provides extensive documentation that includes lists of Lincoln historical sites, prominent books about Lincoln, acknowledgments for picture credits and a thorough index. Stephanie Sammartino McPherson's biography of 19th century astronomer Maria Mitchell, *Rooftop Astronomer*, is one

of the excellent new biographies about women scientists. Yet another stellar example of these positive trends is *Native American Doctor: The Story of Susan LaFlesche Picotte* by Jeri Ferris, which tells the heroic story of a Nebraska physician who treated her own people, the Omahas, as well as non-Indians in the prairie lands of the 19th century. Newbery-medal winning author Joan W. Blos tells the colorful story of Denver's Molly Brown in her new work for children, *The Heroine of the Titanic*. Blos presents her subject as a true heroine, but also as a human being who often embellished the truth and was capable of error as well as heroics.

In the next issue, I will present some creative prompts teachers and parents can give to challenge youth as they encounter first-rate biographies.

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Jerry Flack, Ph.D., is Associate Professor of Gifted Education at the University of Colorado, Colorado Springs, and author of *Inventing, Inventions and Inventors*.



ANTENNA

Current Developments in Gifted Education

My grandson Robbie is five years old. He called me cross-country to dictate a "magic 800" number for ordering his birthday present: an advanced-level version of his favorite computer game. Robbie will soon start school ("Real kindergarten, Grandma...where I learn things.").

When Robbie's father was the same age, I was learning about the challenge of gifted children—the hard way. I attribute my tenacity in the field of gifted education to an unwavering belief in what my children call the half-empty/half-full philosophy. In any given situation, pessimism or optimism will depend on whether you view your cup as half-empty or half-full. I believed that the dearth of challenging education for bright youngsters was like a half-full cup; if we worked hard to fill it to the top, we would at least ensure appropriate educational experiences for our grandchildren.

Robbie was not even born when, in 1983, the National Commission on Excellence in Education declared, "Our Nation is at risk." The Commission warned that "the educational foundations of our society are currently being eroded by a rising tide of mediocrity that threatens our very future as a Nation and a people" (p. 5). Scary stuff—but the report expressed a conviction that American education must and can and will improve.

Once again the half-empty/half-full thinking kicked into place, and I viewed this report as boding well for the future education of gifted and talented students. After all, if we didn't call American education to task, then we couldn't work on fixing it.

Well, the cup has become less full. Although Robbie is going to go to a real school, I have not found a "magic 800" number for ordering challenging

opportunities for this special grandchild of mine. I won't give up, nor will all the parents and students and teachers who continue to speak up against mediocrity.

Studies from the National Research Center on the Gifted and Talented confirm our collective hunch that fewer schools are providing effective programs for gifted learners. It is critical that we re-examine the concept of giftedness (see the last issue of *Understanding Our Gifted*), evaluate our procedures for assessing such traits, and bring this information into schools and classrooms. We must impact children directly and immediately.

Robbie's sister starts school in three years. My cup may yet overflow.

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Dorothy Knopper is a private consultant on gifted education in Colorado and the publisher of *Understanding Our Gifted*.

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Sixth Annual Conference on the Highly Gifted

The Hollingworth Center for Highly Gifted Children is sponsoring its sixth annual conference in Portland, Maine, May 15-17. For information contact the Center at P.O. Box 464, South Casco, Maine 04077 (207) 655-3767 or call Marcia Greason (207) 647-5130.

Fifth Annual AEGUS Conference

"High Potential At Risk" is the theme for the next conference of the Association for the Education of Gifted Underachieving Students (AEGUS) to be held in New Rochelle/New York City, May 15-16. For more information, contact F. Richard Olenchak, Ph.D. (205) 348-7340.

Outstanding New Papers on Ability Grouping

The National Research Center on the Gifted and Talented has recently released 4 research papers by Karen Rogers, James Kulik, Ann Robinson and Robert Hoge & Joseph Renzulli that "will provide powerful ammunition to those persons in the field whose programs are under attack because of pressures from anti-grouping advocates." Write to NRC G/T, University of Connecticut, 362 Fairfield Road, U-7, Storrs, CT 06269-2007, or call (203) 486-4826.

Advanced Development:

Journal on Adult Giftedness Advanced Development

The first journal on adult giftedness, *Advanced Development* focuses on inner development rather than achievement. Volume 4 on "The Self" is now available. The featured theorist is Roberto Assagioli and the moral exemplar is Peace Pilgrim. One-third larger than previous issues, this volume is packed with articles that will inspire you. (\$20 for individuals; \$30 for institutions.) See the order form on page 13 or contact ISAD, 777 Pearl St., Denver, CO 80203 (303) 837-8378.

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FOCUS: COLLABORATIVE EFFORTS

SCHOOL-BUSINESS PARTNERSHIPS

Elinor Katz, Ph.D.

CREATIVE COLLABORATION: A Process for Enhancing Consultation

Deborah A. Weiner, Ed.D.

*Intelligence of a high
order is mysterious,
manifold, fast-moving,
luminous, tantalizing,
and incredibly
beautiful,
like aurora borealis on a
cool September night.*

John Hersey

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May—June, 1992

Volume 4, Issue 5

School-Business Partnerships

Elinor Katz, Ph.D.

Schools and businesses need to work together. Our information based society is creating a need for alliances, collaborations, and partnerships between businesses and education. Within both settings, there is major restructuring and reform taking place. Business leaders are learning that human resource development, quality education, and lifelong learning skills are keys to business survival. Schools are turning to businesses to provide support, expertise, and funding for educational programs. This article discusses some of the reasons why business is entering into partnerships with schools, and the degree of involvement; highlights some examples of successful school-business partnerships in the Colorado area; and gives some suggestions for successful partnerships. Several of the examples demonstrate educational programs which have great benefit for gifted and talented students.

Reasons for Partnerships

Many articles and books voice a concern about the state of education today. There is apprehension about low

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FOCUS ON:

COLLABORATIVE EFFORTS

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Creative Collaboration:

A Process for Enhancing Consultation

Bev Woolhiser, M.A. &
Deborah A. Weiner, Ed.D.

During the past few years, Oregon has been in the midst of making sense of a State Mandate which has the potential to expand gifted programming into the regular classroom. We have spent many hours, together and separately, struggling not only with our excitement of what is possible with the Mandate, but also our concerns that gifted kids be served well and gifted education move forward, not backward. We would like to share with you some of what our efforts have produced so far.

The Creative Collaboration process began in November, 1990, after the National Association for Gifted Children Conference. When we found ourselves on the same flight back to Oregon, we began to discuss the requirements of the Mandate and to talk about how to place and pace students appropriately according to individual academic needs. Neither of us was satisfied with the assessment tools currently available. The "aha" of our conversation was that we both felt strongly that to place and pace students successfully the process had to involve asking kids.

(Continued on page 11)



FROM THE EDITOR

Happy Summer! In this issue we focus on collaborative efforts on behalf of gifted children. Given the current crisis in the schools, it will take teamwork on all of our parts to make sure gifted children's needs are met.

Dr. Elinor Katz, Director of the School of Education at the University of Denver, describes several collaborative programs in which the business community of Colorado provides support for education of gifted students. Ellie's article includes guidelines for creating successful collaborations, as well as rationale for how businesses benefit from such cooperative endeavors. Another example of how businesses can support gifted education is the SBASE (Spokane Business Assisting Scholastic Excellence) program in Spokane, Washington, presented by Judith Taylor. Founded by the business community, the major thrust of SBASE is staff development in the service of excellence.

One of the most potent ways community members can assist gifted students in actualizing their potential is through **mentorships**. Mentors are adult friends/guides who spend time with children of promise in their workplace or anywhere at all, sharing mutual interests and "showing the ropes" of their profession to their proteges. Mentorships consistently have been shown to be critical in shaping the career aspirations of gifted youth. Some mentorships become lifelong affiliations that profoundly influence both parties, such as the relationship between Plato and Socrates.

Bev Woolhiser and Dr. Deborah Weiner have created a collaborative model for meeting gifted students' needs through informative interviews that serve as a basis for planning. Their model has received a good reception in Oregon. Our theme is further explored by Dr. Karen Nelson, who describes how parents, teachers and students can work together to develop plans for compacting gifted students' curriculum to relieve boredom and free up time for independent projects.

Opportunities for collaboration are everywhere once we begin to look for them. It just takes some creative imagination. Happy hunting and creating!

Linda Silverman

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Publisher
Dorothy Knopper

Editor
Dr. Linda Kreger Silverman

Cartoonist
Linda Leviton

Column Editors
Mary Lynn Baum, *Parení, Vancouver, British Columbia*

Dorothy Knopper, *Private Consultant for the Gifted, Boulder, Colorado*

Dr. Deirdre Lovecky, *Clinical Psychologist, Providence, Rhode Island*

Dr. Karen C. Nelson, *Emporia State University, Emporia, Kansas*

Stephanie Tolan, *Author and Consultant, Columbus, Ohio*

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HIDDEN GIFTED LEARNER

The Exceptionally Gifted Child (Part II)

There were endless school conferences about Lydia. Her behavior, peer relationships, quality and completion of work, and general attitude were constantly criticized by teachers. Lydia herself agreed; however, she also felt herself to be a victim of the "buts." "You know," she said, "No matter what I do, it's cancelled out by but." "Lydia is the brightest student we ever had, but she won't do her work." "Lydia writes wonderful poetry, but she won't accept criticism." "We give Lydia special projects to do, but she misses deadlines, and doesn't follow directions."

What is wrong with Lydia? With an IQ score over 180, is she really as incompetent as her teachers think? Actually Lydia has great powers of concentration. She spends weeks on projects of her own devising, loves to explore different topics in the library, spends hours trying to master a math problem chapters ahead in her math book, composes stories in French, and thinks for long hours about how to solve some of the problems of the world.

While seeming to waste a great deal of time, children like Lydia are actually engaged in intense exploration of their own ideas. They get caught on a problem or question and spend all their time thinking about it. Thus, Lydia solves the math problem several chapters ahead but does not do her homework. To force herself to do the homework is difficult. Usually she feels that school and home chores are intrusive and

demand a great deal of her time and energy with little left for her own pursuits. Since her mind is constantly active, there is usually a strong pull towards solving a problem or thinking about something, and she cannot stop herself and put it away until a more convenient time. To do so is too painful; it feels as if a part of herself is being cut off or squeezed into a tiny box. The pressure of being in the box is too much and then Lydia explodes.

Following the task demands in school is also difficult. Lydia appears to run out of interest part way through long term projects even when she selects them. Teachers see her as unmotivated, even manipulative. Yet, for Lydia, it is impossible to go back and accomplish what the teachers want. She has already organized, analyzed, and created a complete response in her mind and gone on to another interest; she is simply somewhere else by the time the work is due. Lydia also finds it difficult to force her mind into the framework that teachers demand. She cannot write a paper using an outline and index cards full of information, or neatly write out every step of a math problem according to the teacher's format. She often cannot answer questions asked in class at the level teachers frame them.

Because of her broad base of knowledge, Lydia often has trouble answering questions that appear simple to more average children. She, in fact, has too much information to draw upon and no way to determine which level of information to give. A good analogy is that if one has but one

clock, one knows what time it is; one is less sure with three clocks, and with a dozen, not only is one unsure of what time it is, but the whole question of what time it is and how we measure it comes into consideration. Thus, at age 7, Lydia was unable to answer simple science questions on a popular achievement test. However, when she was asked to discuss the whole topic of the test, she demonstrated complex understanding of the issues, and showed a wealth of general information. Asked why she could not answer the questions, she said that none of the answers given was **exactly true**, she didn't know what the test makers had in mind in asking the questions, and so could not answer them. Often, this sort of child, when asked a question, leaves a long pause. Given some time, many will respond with precision alternatives..."Do you mean this, or this?" This is not a learning style adaptable to multiple choice achievement tests.

Many argue that the real world demands exceptionally gifted children learn to meet deadlines, do tasks others assign and recognize the necessity of dealing with interruptions of their train of thought. They argue that it does a disservice to gifted children to change task demands to meet these needs. However, meeting such learning needs is important for the exceptionally gifted, because only by understanding their own thinking styles and learning how to use their minds can they ever harness that great mental energy. It is those who are forced at too young an age into others' molds who spend the rest of their lives rebelling or so crushed by the pressure of the tiny box that they never accomplish anything.

Deirdre V. Lovecky, Ph.D., is a licensed clinical psychologist in private practice in Providence, RI, and a frequent author of articles on giftedness in children and adults.

PARENTING

Things Are Not Always As They Seem

Lisa is now eight years old and she has a new friend. But what an unlikely friendship it is! Eight-year-old girls usually play with girls only—boys don't count. But Lisa's friend is a boy named Paul. Her parents wonder what she and Paul have in common. Paul seems to be the slowest child in the class. His handwriting is poor, he labors over every word he writes, he never finishes an assignment and he rarely speaks up at school. The children think he is dumb, and so do his teachers.

Paul does everything very carefully and slowly. He was over two when he first started talking; then he spoke very slowly, with amazingly correct grammar. He quickly developed an enormous vocabulary. He continued to speak slowly and people often lacked the patience to hear him out. Soon he would speak only at home. He did not read until he was seven. When he made a mistake he always began again at the beginning of the page until he could read the whole page perfectly.

Paul's parents were amazed at his insights and his fund of information. He had become interested in the Civil War, but no one really knew how he had acquired all his knowledge. As his parents talked with each other, they realized that their own childhoods were somewhat similar. They did satisfactory work at school, but no one thought them exceptional. Now they are both outstanding physicists.

At school only a glimmer of Paul's potential could be seen. Once, when

the teacher made the whole class stay in because one child had thrown a paper airplane, he got very angry and said, "If you punish me for something I have not done you are violating my civil rights." The teacher stared at him in amazement and actually reconsidered her punishment. But according to all the usual standards Paul demonstrated no more than average abilities.

Why did Lisa and Paul become friends? Gifted children usually seek each other out. The other girls even teased Lisa about it and distanced themselves from her. But Lisa was unperturbed. "He's so much fun! He knows all about astronomy. He talks about infinity all the time. He helps me understand the world better."

One Saturday, Lisa's parents invited Paul to their house. They were amazed at his vocabulary and his outlook on life. Most of the day the children played complicated board games that Paul had invented. "Why don't you ever talk at school?" Lisa asked Paul. "I am puzzled myself about my inability to communicate with children and teachers. I must find the missing link," he replied sadly.

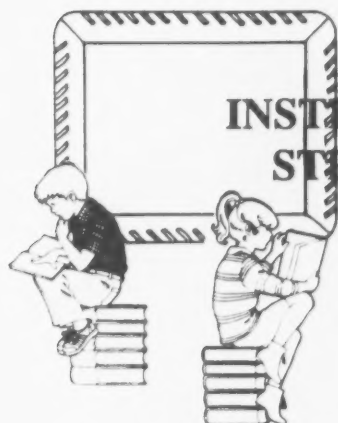
After Paul left, Lisa said to her parents, "Now do you see how much

fun he is? I think he is the smartest boy in the school." And she was right. When he was tested, Paul's IQ was around 180. His parents were not surprised; they had had similar experiences. Paul was a perfectionist from the day he was born. Because he was so bright he had a concept of what was perfect and he worked diligently to achieve it. His motivation was his drive to make sense of the world and use his creativity. He followed his own inner agenda. He soon learned that he could not make others understand him. He was not angry or disturbed, but he did feel lonely until he and Lisa found each other.

Most elements of this story are true. Even though this is an extreme case, many gifted children have similar experiences. The gifted, particularly the highly gifted, do not perform or achieve according to the usual expectations. If we judge children by their school achievement we will often miss the truly gifted. I would like to encourage parents to trust their own observations and look for help from those who know the gifted.

Dr. Annemarie Roeper is a consultant on the gifted in Oakland, CA, and author of the book, *Educating Children for Life*. Co-founder of the Roeper City and Country School and the *Roeper Review*, Annemarie has inspired a worldwide focus on global awareness in gifted education.





INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES

Karen C. Nelson

Curriculum Compacting:

A Model for Teacher/Specialist/
Parent Collaboration

The special educational needs of gifted students are met only partially by part-time pullout programs. The gifted student is gifted all week long—not just one hour on Tuesday when she attends "Gifted." Curriculum Compacting is an approach to differentiating the pace and content of learning for bright students that can be applied across the regular curriculum and throughout the school day. Compacting buys time for enrichment and acceleration while guaranteeing proficiency in basic curriculum (Starko, 1985, p. 39).

Compacting provides an ideal opportunity for collaborative effort between the regular educator and gifted education specialist. Parents can also be partners in collaboration. In this article we'll look at two variations of Compacting, then comment more specifically on the collaborative aspects of this model and suggest a step-by-step resource for learning to apply this procedure.

Diagnostic-Prescriptive Approach

There are two general approaches to Compacting: the *Diagnostic-Prescriptive (DP)* and the

Acceleration method. In the DP method precocious students are pre-tested in basic curricular areas to determine what skills/knowledge they already evidence and what islands of ignorance remain to be addressed. This form of compacting is most appropriate in the elementary grades where gifted students may develop basic skills far in advance of their age peers.

Let's take, for example, Kim, who enters second grade already reading at the fifth grade level. Rather than advance Kim to a fifth grade reading group, using the DP method, the following more systematic approach could be taken.

(1) *Diagnosis:* At the start of the school year the unit tests or end-of-year test for the second grade basal reader can be given to see if there are topics like Suffixes or Plural Possessives Kim does not know, even though she is a fluent, self-taught reader. The Scope and Sequence Chart for the basal reader will identify pages in the pupil's book which address the targeted topics.

(2) *Prescription:* The next step is to choose the best way to teach Kim the knowledge she needs. Several options would be:

- Kim teaches herself from assigned pages in the book;
- teacher or paraprofessional teaches Kim individually;
- parents home tutor on the targeted topics.

The prescription must also include *learning extensions* Kim pursues when classmates are in reading groups. These might be:

- time in the gifted resource room
- free reading or a reading list provided by a librarian or drawn from a resource like *Guiding Gifted Readers* (Halsted, 1988)
- independent projects mentored by the g/t specialist
- other options designed collaboratively by Kim, her parents and teachers.

In the best of all possible worlds, a school district's gifted program will have a Scope and Sequence of curriculum for gifted students at each level from which the learning extensions might be drawn, but they should also be designed with Kim's own interests clearly in focus. After all, it is not teachers and parents who will be doing the extra work, as many students will see it—especially if they don't have a choice in what the learning extensions will be.

Accelerative Compacting

The *Accelerative* approach to Compacting for bright students is most appropriate in the upper grades where students encounter content they do not know, but can learn significantly faster than their peers. A common approach would be for gifted students to teach themselves on a unit by unit basis. (*Units* can be thought of as chapters, weeks or other ways of segmenting curriculum.)

(Continued on Page 6)

Hillary, a quick ninth grader, might study Earth Science on her own, covering each chapter in two days while classmates spend two weeks on the same chapter. As soon as she's ready, Hillary takes the chapter exam, and if she passes with 90% or better (or other target score designated by the teacher) she spends the remainder of the time working on an independent study in environmental studies—an area of passionate interest for her.

As an alternative to this unit-by-unit approach, Hillary might write a contract with her teacher to take the final exam as soon as she has mastered course materials independently, then proceed to work on her environmental studies project until the end of the semester. Hillary's contract with her teacher should specify:

- where Hillary will work
- who will supervise the project (teacher, parent, mentor)
- time line
- outcomes: what products, performances, etc. will result.

Let Hillary be responsible for writing the contract and negotiating terms with her teacher.

Whichever the accelerative approach, it will work with a group of gifted students as well. They can study with Hillary, take the test together, then proceed to do joint research or an environmental service project, produce a science publication, etc.

Collaborating

With secondary students, as we saw with Hillary, above, responsibility can rest to a large degree on the gifted student to initiate the request for compacting, write the contract and design the learning extension. The parent or g/t specialist can provide support for the student's request and supervision of independent work.

With elementary students, responsibility for Compacting needs to rest

primarily with the teacher in charge of the majority of the gifted student's schooling. This teacher has specific expertise in the elements of the basal curriculum and has overall responsibility for scheduling the student's school time.

The g/t specialist, however, can work collaboratively with the classroom teacher in at least four ways:

- (1) provide training in Compacting through teacher inservice;
- (2) coach the classroom teacher through first attempts at implementing Compacting;
- (3) provide lists of options, learning centers and other enrichment materials for learning extensions;
- (4) supervise and instruct learning extensions.

Even where a school has no specialized g/t staff, a teacher can implement Curriculum Compacting without the assistance of the specialist. Although parents can be part of the teaching team in either case, in this instance the parent can work collaboratively with the teacher to design and help supervise appropriate Prescriptions.

Parents can also initiate requests for Compacting and help coach teachers who are willing but inexperienced in this approach to modifying curriculum for an exceptional child. After parents have seen how Compacting is done, they can become expert Collaborators in tailoring subsequent Compacted learning for their unique child.

Parents need to be alert as to whether basic curriculum has been covered for their accelerated learner. As we saw in the Kim example, children can have advanced abilities in a school subject like reading without having mastered

certain basic skills, simply through lack of exposure to a topic. This also occurs when children skip grades without appropriate testing of the curricular areas they are skipping.

An excellent resource for training teachers in Compacting is Alane Starko's (1986) *It's About Time*, which provides an inservice program—including masters for handouts and transparencies—that walks educators through the steps

required for compacting. Forms to systematize planning and record keeping are included, as well as two simulations that take participants through the steps of developing a one page form for planning and recording compacting procedures for a hypothetical gifted child. (The inservice will take 2 1/2 - 3 hours to present thoroughly.)

Although Starko's materials do not give parents a specific role in Compacting, they can be used by parents to learn about and share this method for differentiating curriculum. Compacting provides an obvious opportunity for parent-teacher collaboration; an inservice on Compacting presented to teachers could also include parents of gifted students who are likely candidates for this approach.

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[Note: To obtain these materials, place a special request at your local bookstore.]

Karen C. Nelson, Ph.D., is Coordinator of the graduate program in gifted education at Emporia State University in Kansas. She has been a public school teacher, curriculum editor, writer and poet.

*Compacting buys time
for enrichment and
acceleration while
guaranteeing proficiency
in basic curriculum.*

THE READING ROOM

Welcome to the reading room. Today, instead of discussing particular books, we will talk about gifted children and reading. As parents or teachers of the gifted, we often find ourselves taking reading for granted. Many gifted children learn to read before setting foot in a regular classroom; ask them how they did it, and they are likely to say they don't know. It just happened. By late elementary school, readers like this are usually unable to remember a time when they couldn't read. They feel as if they'd been born reading.

Though not every gifted child finds the road to reading this easy, it is those "born readers" that we focus on today because they sometimes miss out on an important aspect of the reading experience. Busy parents, when they see that their preschoolers are reading, may succumb to the temptation to hand their children books, in the way some parents plop children in front of television. Comforted by the idea that reading is "good for children," these parents don't realize that one of the most important values of children's books is the social context in which they are encountered.

The young child who does not read often begins his interaction with books cuddled in the lap of a caring adult, a parent or grandparent. As the adult reads aloud the child gets far more than the story—he gets warmth, security, love, and a sense of sharing something important. Characters or sayings in the book become shared friends, sometimes "in" references for the whole family. "What an Amelia

Bedelia you are," someone will say, or "No fighting, no biting!"

When a very young child begins reading independently, parents who cherish both the child and the new ability may believe that further reading to that child will stunt or inhibit her independent reading. Teachers, too, may make this mistake. They may still take the child to the library so that she can pick out new books, but the reading of those books becomes for the child a solitary activity. Gone is the warmth and cuddling, the sharing with parents, siblings, teacher and classmates, of story and character.

No matter when a gifted child begins reading, adults must remember to keep shared reading alive. Hearing a story read aloud does *not* interfere with a child's growing ability to read. And as children grow older, it's important to remember that there is no such thing as "too old to be read to." In some families reading aloud times are a thread that winds through their entire history, providing memories that never fade. As the children's ability to read improves, they become readers as well as read-to. Taking turns choosing the books lets

every participant contribute something to the pool of memories.

An especially important aspect of reading aloud is the opportunity to share books that are beyond the "reading level" of the child. One never knows which books will have a lifelong impact. My own writing career almost certainly had its beginning when my mother read *David Copperfield* aloud when my brother and sister were thirteen and fifteen and I was only eight. I was "too young for Dickens." But Uriah Heep and Mr. McCawber, Betsy Trotwood and David himself took root in my soul.

Reading is a precious gift that will last a lifetime; most of the time it's a solitary one. But no one is more likely to keep the habit than a child for whom reading was also shared.

Stephanie Tolan, from Columbus, Ohio, is a noted author of children's books and one of the authors of the award-winning book, *Guiding the Gifted Child*.



test scores, lack of basic skills, and high dropout rates. These and other issues are having a profound effect on the work force. Business leaders are worried about having an adequately trained work force. Currently, there is a sharp decline in the supply of skilled entry level workers.

During the 1950s and 1960s the schools relied on volunteers to assist with educational programs. Mothers were recruited to help with reading, field trips, the library, and other various activities in the schools. By the 1970s more women entered the job market, so the schools turned to college students, senior citizens, and local businesses to help in the schools. Today there are more than 140,800 educational partnerships and the number will continue to increase during this decade (Merenda, 1989).

At both the national and state levels there is increased interest in education. The national goals for education and the agenda for America 2000 have put education into the limelight. With the demand for quality educational programs at its height and the shortage of sufficient funding to create these programs, schools are turning to businesses for help and support. Collaboration between schools and businesses can be very beneficial if both sides understand the goals of the partnership.

Types of Partnerships

The types of partnerships can vary depending upon the goals of the educational program and the degree of involvement of business within the school. Some of the levels of partnerships defined by the National Alliance of Business (Merenda, 1989) are as follows:

Today there are more than 140,800 educational partnerships and the number will continue to increase during this decade.

1. **Policy.** The purpose of this type of relationship is to influence legislation, governance, and direction for a school or school district. A recent

edition of a newsletter published by a state school board association suggested that if the business community wanted to have greater involvement within the schools, then they should run for the local school board. By participating in the decision making group they could have a direct role in shaping the policy of the schools.

2. **Partners in Systematic Educational Improvements.** At this level the school and business identify a strategy or plan that both parties agree to work on. An example of this is the Colorado Alliance for Business which has worked closely with a metropolitan Denver high school to implement designated changes in the program such as looking at the mission statement and goals for the school as well as providing support for the academic programs.

3. **Partners in Management.** Business can provide assistance with many management functions within a school. In the Denver Public Schools there are Community Decision Making Teams within each school. A representative from business serving on one of these committees can bring to the group information about management systems, budgets, personnel, public relations, and other areas of business administration.

4. **Partners in Teacher Training and Development.** The educational programs for administrators and teachers could be greatly enhanced through a relationship

with business. From the business perspective, there is a need for retraining business professionals who are losing their positions because of reorganization within the corporation. A partnership between a large university, the University of Colorado, Boulder, and a corporation, IBM, is currently providing this service. Many businesses are providing professional development or internship experiences for educators. Recently a group of teachers and administrators in Fort Collins, Colorado, attended a two day seminar on Total Quality Management sponsored by a major corporation.

5. **Partners in the Classroom.** This is one of the most popular forms of partnership. In classrooms throughout the country volunteers from business are teaching lessons, sharing skills, or working with individual students in mentorship programs. Several corporations in Colorado allow employees released time to work in the schools.

As the involvement of businesses with schools grows, so will the levels of participation. New and innovative alliances will develop in the near future. Many of the collaborations provide challenging and innovative programs for bright students. The next section highlights some of the programs being implemented by successful partnerships. The examples are collaborative efforts between the University of Denver, business and industry, and school districts. Thousands of students in Colorado are participating in these educational activities.

Successful School Business Partnerships *Odyssey of the Mind*

Odyssey of the Mind (OM) is an international educational program which promotes divergent thinking in

students from kindergarten through college. This program offers students a unique opportunity to participate in challenging and motivating activities. Participants compete in a variety of areas from building mechanical devices such as spring driven cars to rewriting and performing literary classics. An estimated 10,000 students in Colorado will participate in OM activities this year.

This outstanding educational program sponsored by a private university, the University of Denver, in collaboration with many public and private schools, was having problems with marketing and budgeting. A local businessman, who also was a coach with the program, offered to form a Corporate Relations Committee to support the state organization. The primary purpose of the committee is to provide in-kind or financial support. Today there are more than 12 businesses including IBM, Martin-Marietta, AT&T, United Banks, and others participating as corporate sponsors.

In an interview with the chairperson, it was said that companies are willing to support OM because there are indirect corporate related benefits such as employee resources, teamwork and communication, marketing, planning, presentation and sales skills, organizational and management skills, and product implementation. Businesses profit from these competitions in several ways. The OM competition is task oriented and stresses the importance of getting things done, bringing a project to completion, and learning to work as a team. They provide children with skills not always addressed in the classroom. In addition, the students become critical thinkers and problem solvers, important skills for the employee of the future.

Ricks Center for Gifted Children

The Ricks Center for Gifted Children is an exemplary program designed for

gifted and talented students, preschool through eighth grade. The philosophy of this program is to focus on academic excellence and social/emotional development, taking into consideration the individual needs of the whole child. Currently, 150 students are enrolled in the program. Admission for preschool and pre-kindergarten students is based on information supplied by parents from informal, activity based interaction with the Ricks Center teachers. Admission for older students is based on demonstrated need defined through individually administered assessments determining general intellectual ability, specific academic talent, information processing style, levels of abstract conceptualization, and parental perception. The academic program utilizes an integrated curricular approach including mathematics, reading, literature, language arts, science, social studies, history, foreign language and culture, computer science, affective development, critical thinking, visual and performing arts, physical education and independent study.

This program had everything except a school building to call home. The program had humble beginnings in one public school classroom as a cooperative program between the Denver Public Schools and the University of Denver. As the program grew, more classrooms were added both within the school district and on the university campus. Needless to say, having one program in two locations was a serious problem. For several years the educators and parents worked on various plans to secure a home for this program. In 1990, the

Chancellor of the University of Denver donated the land on the campus, with the understanding that the parents in the school and the university would work together to raise the money for a new building. This was a new and exciting challenge for the members of the fund raising committee. In the beginning, most of the donations were from parents and business. With the help and support of the university, several large donations were given to the project. One of the philanthropic foundations in Colorado made a major contribution to complete the fund raising effort. In November of 1991, a brand new state of the art school building was dedicated for a group of very special young people.

The Making of an Engineer

The Making of an Engineer is a summer program developed especially for high school students with a strong interest in science and technology. It covers much of the same material as the required freshman course, Introduction to Engineering I. The goal stated in the brochure is to stimulate interest in engineering as a critical service profession. Another goal is to interest minority and women students in the field of engineering. Each summer there are approximately 45 participants in the three week

In classrooms throughout the country volunteers from business are teaching lessons, sharing skills, or working with individual students in mentorship programs.

residential experience on campus. For the last few years, this program has been supported by a grant from the National

Science Foundation. But in order to provide scholarships for qualified students, the program needed support from business and industry. The corporate sponsors include Hewlett-Packard, IBM, Marathon Oil, US West, Coors, and Martin-Marietta.

Some indicators of the success of this program are a second round of funding from the National Science Foundation with a designation as one of the top 10 programs in its category of funding, continued support from the sponsoring corporations, and, of special note, four female minority students enrolled as freshmen in the University of Denver's Engineering program last year.

The VIP Program

The VIP Program is a cooperative program in which the University of Denver and the Community College of Denver are sponsors of West High School in Denver. West High School is located in downtown Denver and the majority of the population are minority students representing diverse cultures and backgrounds. The primary aim of the program is to encourage high school students to remain in school, to learn about the importance of completing high school, and to structure the essential bridge between high school and higher education for all students. The VIP Program, as an intervention strategy, is designed with the understanding that most non-college-bound high school graduates and dropouts come from families that have virtually no college and often no high school graduation experiences in their backgrounds. They have never been seriously motivated and counseled to set career and lifestyle goals or commit to college preparation. Most of these students have never been on a college campus or exposed to what higher education is all about. The VIP Program is designed to fill these voids in the personal experiences of these students and their families.

In 1990, this partnership of colleges adopted the freshman class at West High School. The 525 students visited each of the college campuses for a day of activities, presentations about the importance of staying in school were made in every English class, parents were invited to an evening session

about sending your student to college, and the faculty of the school was invited to the campuses for seminars. At the present time there are 1,200 students participating in the program from the freshman and sophomore classes.

A promise of support and financial aid for every qualified student is a goal of this program. Therefore, business, industry, and foundations have joined together to raise funds to support the activities of the VIP Program and to provide scholarship monies for the students.

Tips for Successful School-Business Partnerships

A great deal of time and effort are a normal part of a successful partnership. Most of the programs cited in this article took years to achieve their goals. Several guidelines were followed in planning the programs. Here are some ideas you might find helpful:

- **Focus on an educational program or topic that is important to the business.** In order to have a successful partnership, the business has to be supportive of the idea and the idea needs to reflect the mission of the organization. A shared vision is essential for the partnership.

- **Allow time for planning and discussions.** A well designed program is easier to implement than one that does not have clearly defined goals, objectives, implementation plan, and evaluation design. In education, it is important to define the outcomes expected as a result of the program. By building outcomes into the plan in the beginning, you have the accountability issue addressed right from the start. Monitor the implementation of the program carefully and document what is happening. Have periodic meetings with recorded minutes to review the

progress of the partnership. By meeting on a regular basis you can fine tune the program and make appropriate changes as needed. You will also have a record of the program which can be used for many purposes.

- **Public relations is an integral part of a partnership.** One of the prime benefits for business and industry is the positive publicity that one gets from a successful venture. You can build a public relations program into the plan by including written materials about the program, brochures, visual displays, and presentations at meetings and conferences. A successful program improves the "image" of all the partners.

As educators, parents, and business leaders we can help shape education in our community by engaging in partnerships, collaborations, and alliances. There is no limit on the size and scope of the educational activities. As a team, we are responsible for the education of our students.

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Dr. Elinor Katz is Director of the School of Education at the University of Denver. She has been actively involved with gifted and talented education for the last 14 years.

By the time we had reached Portland, we had designed interviews to address the present status of the child's educational program through the eyes and opinions of the three most important persons involved: the child, the teacher and the parent. Data collected from the interviews was to be looked at closely for elements and changes which

might need to be made regarding all aspects of the child's academic program, that is, academic placement, challenge, pace, and other factors critical to personal educational achievement.

This interview format has proven to be a valuable tool for planning the student's program because of the positive input from parents, the student and classroom teacher, right from the start. It recognizes that our gifted children have information that is important for us to know. Therefore, it is vital that they be involved in sharing their perceptions and helping to set goals for their own education. The interview format also provides a structure for classroom teachers to contribute their professional insights and share the modifications they have already made for their students.

We realized that this gathering of information was part of a bigger picture—needing to collaborate with classroom teachers. It was essential that this collaborative process happen in a manner consistent with the best practices used by gifted and creative individuals. In retrospect, the steps we went through to arrive at our Creative Collaboration process parallel the process we have designed. We hope it will serve as a guide for consulting teachers and other collaborators.

We affectionately refer to this Creative Collaborative process as our

Magic PENCIL because PENCIL is the acronym for the six steps of the process. These steps are: **Preparing, Engaging, Noting strengths and needs, Creating a plan, Idea testing, and keeping it Lit(e).** Two goals are

Our gifted children have information that is important for us to know.

the focus for this process. First, we want our students to be happy, responsible and autonomous life-long learners.

Second, we want to help teachers become more effective, creative and self-confident teaching bright students. The process itself serves as a structure to follow as we face the challenge of implementing gifted education services that will bring successful and lasting results. If ever there was a time when we need a process to provide direction and facilitate the creation of solutions it is now.

The Creative Collaboration process is grounded in Paul Torrance's (Torrance 1965, 1979; Torrance & Safter, 1990) extensive work on creativity, and George Betts' (1985) Autonomous Learner Model. As it follows the divergent-convergent approach developed by Osborne and Parnes (Noller, Parnes & Biondi, 1976), this Magic PENCIL is a creative problem solving model. The special function of the Creative Collaboration process is to facilitate human interaction and involvement along with addressing situational problems. We consider not only students, but consultants, teachers, parents, and administrators key participants in this autonomous learning process.

Step 1. P = Preparing (Be Ready)

Probably the most important step in any task is preparation. The most important preparation we do may be the invisible, seldom-scrutinized preparation that is accomplished day

by day through our life experiences, both professional and personal. Everything that is read, studied and experienced is part of this preparation. These experiences give us a vast warehouse of knowledge from which to draw at a moment's notice. How exciting! How reassuring! Also, we need to remember that our warehouse is different from everyone else's—unique just like us!

One of the challenges in consulting is to understand, assimilate and meet the various perspectives, needs and timelines of other people and groups while also keeping yourself on track. This can get overwhelming and confusing especially in terms of differing priorities. Set goals as you embark upon your collaborative journey. This will help to focus your effectiveness and increase feelings of satisfaction. Don't forget to review those goals as you proceed—they may need to be altered now and then.

Step 2. E = Engaging (Look for and Explore Opportunities)

Too many teachable moments just pass us by. This step encourages us to become more aware of opportunities. Here we are working toward improving our ability to find, explore and benefit from moments of possibility. This is a time of learning, gathering information and checking perceptions.

It is difficult to pursue opportunities if we do not go where the action is. If we aren't there and ready when the door or window opens, the moment might not arise again. On the other hand, creating opportunities is an exciting pastime and probably a necessity if you are trying to run an educational program on a shoestring budget. The skills of creating opportunities have usually been well developed by life-long learners, enabling them to pursue their interests and passions in depth.

Engaging in conversation, listening attentively and asking questions open doors for further exploration. One of the most meaningful experiences for us is viewing problems as opportunities. This new perspective facilitates problem clarity and brings positive energy to the process.

The purpose of this step is not necessarily to find all of the answers as much as to increase our understanding of what the problems are and where the pathways that lead to solutions might be discovered. Give yourself time to process the importance of what you learn. The insights gained will contribute a great deal to the quality of your consulting and collaborating.

Step 3. N = Noting Strengths & Needs

(Find out what you each know and need)

Crucial to the collaboration process is an atmosphere of trust and caring on the part of all parties. The first step at this stage is to clarify the goals of the collaboration. Find out what is currently happening in the classroom or home.

It is at this point that the parent, student and classroom teacher are interviewed verbally using the three interview forms described earlier in this article. The student interview includes, for example, the following questions.

- What do you think are your strengths?
- What are some things that you have difficulty with?
- On a scale of 1 (being low) to 5 (being high), how self-directed are you? At home? At school?
- If you could improve school for yourself, what would you do?

- What do you see yourself possibly doing or being involved with in the future?

It is during these interviews that we search for clues which will lead us to the student's strengths and educational needs. In our opinion, the power of these interviews comes from the verbal interaction between the interviewee (parent, student or classroom teacher) and the interviewer. Advantages of the verbal interview include:

1. Allows for spontaneous answers rather than planned responses.
2. Provides interviewees who may not be as comfortable writing their thoughts the opportunity to go in depth when responding.
3. Allows for expansion on answers and probing questions to provide clarity and depth about information which may be misleading in written responses.
4. Allows for the observation of nonverbals.
5. Reaffirms the importance of the interviewee to the educational planning process.

Are your PENCILS sharpened?

Preparing—Be ready

Engaging—Look for & explore opportunities

Noting strengths and needs—Find out what you both know & need

Creating a plan—Think possibilities, then focus

Idea testing—Set it in motion. . . implement

keeping it Lit(e)!



6. Begins a relationship which will continue through the implementation phase.

We have found that parents appreciate the fact that we really want to hear their observations, feelings and opinions about their child. Teachers appreciate the time that they can focus on thinking about one particular child. Students are pleased and surprised to be asked for their input. Therefore, we would like to recommend that those using this process not opt for handing the interview form to the participants to fill out on their own.

If at all possible, the interviewer needs to be a person who is not directly involved in the situation. The gifted education coordinator or resource teacher would be the ideal person for this collaborative role because of his or her expertise and commitment to the value of the process. If the classroom teacher conducts the student and parent interviews, then the coordinator, resource teacher or principal should conduct the teacher interview. The skills of the interviewer may need to be used to draw out information and to clarify or probe where appropriate. However, the interviewee is first, last and always the final judge of what is true for him or her.

Keys to Successful Interviewing

1. Approach interviewees with respect.
2. Facilitate to find out what the interviewee knows.
3. Keep an open mind and listen fully to what is being said.
4. Keep the interviewing process positive.

Most important, we have found that in this collaborative context, the interviewing process affords the opportunity to probe the depths of complex situations and leads to greater success in finding meaningful and effective solutions.

As an example, one question on the student interview is, "How do you

usually respond when you have a problem?" The interviewer might look for information that reflects:

- *problem solving ability*
- *originality of responses*
- *confidence in ability to solve problems*
- *resilience in bouncing back from a problem.*

The teacher and parent are asked a similar question about how the student is likely to respond to a problem. The answers in combination may provide new insights and help in structuring more positive learning experiences for this student.

Step 4. C = Creating a Plan

(Think possibilities, then focus)

In creating an educational pathway for a student we recommend integrating the information gathered from the interviews in Step 3 with other assessment information. Begin with the determination of the educational needs of the student (academic, social-emotional, personal, etc.). Each need is then approached by an open-ended process which examines several possible options, selecting the best match for the child. Select criteria to judge these ideas. For example:

- *Which plan holds the most promise?*
- *Which plan fits the student best?*
- *Are the goals reachable?*
- *Does the plan build on the child's strengths and successes?*
- *Will the experience be a positive journey for the student?*

The student must be an integral part of this process. Up to this point the process has involved the parent, the student, and the teacher. But for a plan to be the most successful, the student must feel that this is the right

plan. Ideally, the student would be actively involved in developing, monitoring and evaluating his or her own plan.

A written plan might include:

- *educational needs*
- *goals to be attained and aimed toward*
- *teaching strategies*
- *learning activities*
- *materials and resources*
- *tools for the assessment of progress.*

A sample learning plan format is shown in Figure 1 (page 14). Keep in mind that we want this to be a successful experience for the teacher, parent *and* student.

Step 5. I = Idea Testing and Implementing

(Set it in motion)

The implementation stage follows the development of the plan in Step 4. In the Idea Testing phase, we need to closely observe the process and when necessary give ourselves permission to adjust the plan. We may need to try new ideas, to experiment, to fail, to try again. Creating an appropriate pathway is risky and some terrain works better than others. It can be exciting to blaze new trails even when the end point is uncertain. If we lock ourselves or our students in to a pre-planned end point with no flexibility for change it could very easily become an unhappy experience for all. We can almost think of this step as a series of small problems which need to be solved.

This is a time of encouragement, support and acknowledgment of progress. This step is based upon student need as determined from the collaborative interview and planning process. The amount of responsibility taken by the student or teacher will vary depending on the subject,

activities, and preference for independence and self-direction in learning. The role of the teacher at this step is to facilitate the students' understanding of their own learning process and the ability to make decisions that are positive and meaningful for them. It is important for the teacher to give appropriate feedback to the student during this stage. If the student is sailing along successfully, the teacher lets the student know that he or she is aware of this progress. If the student hits some rough storms, it may be time for the teacher to talk about strategies for making it through or changing direction. Relish and applaud progress. Take and share credit for the small steps as well as the giant strides.

Step 6. L = Keeping it Lit(e)

(Keep it going and keep it light)

Once a decision is made and a plan is put in action, the key is to maintain the commitment. The facilitator of the process needs to find ways to keep the momentum going. Observe the student as the plan moves ahead. The student's progress will provide the motivation for keeping it going. The teacher provides the facilitation for the student just as the consulting teacher provides the support for the classroom teacher.

Another aspect that contributes to "keeping it lit" is keeping it light. We want to encourage enthusiasm and increase the ability to work through times of feeling overwhelmed and discouraged. Celebrate successes. Continue to collaborate creatively. Laugh, smile and be open to new possibilities. Be willing to work with a change in direction. Network and help teachers and students learn to make and enjoy new connections. Communicate your support.

SBASE, a non-profit corporation founded in Spokane, Washington.
SBASE, businesses and individuals committed to Spokane's future.
SBASE, an advocate for gifted students.
SBASE, All of the Above—and More.

Judith L. Taylor

From all outward appearances, Spokane, Washington, is no different than any other community in America—with one unique exception. Spokane has SBASE. As its name proclaims, Spokane Business Assisting Scholastic Excellence (SBASE) is actively committed to the future of Spokane's children and Spokane's community. As stated by Tom Brice, SBASE President, "We know we can't reach every child individually, but we can do the next best thing. We can help teachers recognize and motivate gifted students [through] ...training, advanced teaching methods, [and] with symposiums of gifted education."

SBASE was founded as a volunteer organization in 1983 by local business people. A nonprofit corporation, it is governed by a board of volunteer directors from the business and education community of Spokane, Washington. Over the years the 18-member SBASE Board has been represented by a variety of businesses and schools: IBM, Hewlett-Packard, Washington Water Power Co., Inland Empire Paper Co., Educational Service District #101, Tidyman's Warehouse Foods, superintendents from public and private schools, leaders of gifted organizations, banking industries, realtors and medical staff.

What's the purpose of SBASE? To encourage and support scholastic excellence. It supports the ideal that each student should progress at a pace appropriate with his or her ability to

master knowledge and skills and to develop special abilities to their fullest.

How is this accomplished? Through funding and support of educational services to the teachers, administrators and counselors of Spokane's future potential leaders: gifted students. SBASE has no paid staff. Every dollar raised locally is spent locally on scholarships and symposiums for educators. Eleven tuitions were funded the first year they awarded scholarships (1984), and an additional 131 scholarships were funded by SBASE within the next four years.

Why does SBASE pursue scholastic excellence in this particular way? SBASE hopes to enhance teachers' abilities to better educate their students by encouraging them to pursue professional development. To take this one step further, research indicates that better educated teachers are more successful in teaching students at every level of ability; therefore, SBASE is helping to set the highest standards of academic excellence for all students.

Nowhere to go but up... SBASE has also established an annual symposium that presents nationally acclaimed experts as an effective way of reaching a wider audience of educators. Since 1985, the symposia have explored such relevant topics as: "The Potential of Gifted Education in the Regular Program," "Emotional and Social Needs of the Gifted," "Focus on Early Childhood: Teaching Bright Children," "Underachieving Secondary Gifted"

and "Gifted Students in Today's Schools."

And, just to stay on the cutting edge, in addition to scholarships and symposia, SBASE Board members meet with area college and university presidents in luncheon settings to present SBASE to them, to advocate their offering more course work for scholarship recipients, and to explore ways that Washington State higher education can impact elementary and secondary education.

The SBASE Board also supports the Advanced Placement program taught at the high school level by teachers certified in specific subjects through a national program. Other areas of support are: encouraging gifted students to pursue their college education in Washington by having admissions standards consider high school class content as well as grade point average (an approach already used in Texas and California); a forum in which educators and parents in the Spokane area can exchange views on issues of giftedness, thereby facilitating communication between these groups; and a recognition and award program for educators of gifted students.

Is Spokane unique? They prefer to think so. But then, they're prejudiced; they have SBASE.

Judith L. Taylor is Administrative Secretary for Margo Long, Founder and Director of the Center for Gifted Education at Whitworth College in Spokane, Washington.

THE HIGHLY GIFTED

Educating Highly Gifted Children In an Age of Recession (Part I)

The current economic recession has hit the nation hard, and education budgets throughout the country have been slashed. Often, the first programs to go have been programs for gifted children, the double target of spending cuts and school reform efforts. For highly gifted children, whose needs are particularly difficult to meet solely within an age-graded heterogeneous classroom, such trends spell unusual difficulty for them and for their families and schools. Some of these difficulties are economic in nature. In this column and the next, we will explore these issues, including the responsibilities of both the school and the family.

Responsibilities of the School

Cutting programs for the gifted does not mean that highly gifted children will go away. In fact, such cost-cutting means that it is very likely that these children will be found in the regular classroom for the entire school day. A school's mission to educate all children must mean *all* children—including the most intellectually gifted. These children, like all other children, are required by compulsory attendance laws to attend school, yet they have no legal protection for a free and appropriate education. Until such protection can be established by law, it is up to the schools to recognize their moral obligation to educate highly gifted children appropriately, rather than leaving them "...languishing unchallenged by regular classroom practices ...asked to revisit material they have already learned" (Lawton, 1992, p.4).

Luckily, such efforts need not break the budget. Some educational options ultimately may even save money for

both the school district and the family. Flexibility, not large sums of money, is a key ingredient. The following suggestions for schools outline important attitudes and practices necessary to provide equitably for highly gifted children in recessionary times.

Individual needs are more important than policies or philosophies.

Just as we have worked over the past decade to make public buildings physically accessible to the disabled, we must work to make our age-graded schools intellectually accessible to the highly gifted. This may involve altering or waiving certain policies, such as those prohibiting acceleration or ability grouping. Educators may need to revise their concepts of normal child development to accommodate the seven-year-old who can do algebra, but can't yet tie his shoes.

Accept intellectual diversity.

The highly intellectually gifted child has as much right to inclusion, to an appropriate educational program, and to a school environment free from pejorative remarks about his or her abilities, as any other child.

Allow highly gifted children to accelerate their academic progress, to test out of material that they already know, and to complete individual projects.

If the gifted program is a victim of budget cuts, reorganize regular classrooms so that some cluster grouping can occur. Highly gifted children benefit greatly from spending some time with intellectual peers. Cluster grouping allows this to happen on a regular basis at minimal cost.

Acceleration can save money.

There are many ways to accelerate academically. In most cases, the necessary resources are already available.

Be fair.

Budget cuts should fairly target all groups in the school community, not fall disproportionately on a few programs. If cooperative learning is used in heterogeneous classrooms, extreme care must be taken not to exploit highly gifted children (Robinson, 1990).

Remember, you can always do something for a highly gifted child.

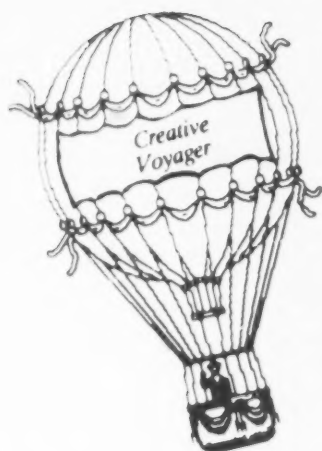
Even the most impoverished school can allow a highly gifted child to work at his or her own pace in a particular subject, complete alternate assignments or projects, or join a group of older children for instruction. If there is no gifted coordinator, the principal or another staff member can act as the child's case manager. Any of these options is far better than doing nothing, and is a tangible message to the family, the community, and the child that we understand and appreciate that child's needs and unique developmental patterns, and share a commitment to educate him or her appropriately even in difficult times.

In the next issue: Economic issues and responsibilities facing families of the highly gifted will be discussed.

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- Kathi Kearney, M.A.Ed., is Founder of the Hollingworth Center for Highly Gifted Children in South Casco, Maine, a doctoral candidate at Teachers College, Columbia University, and editor of *Highly Gifted Children*.

IN SEARCH OF SERENDIPITY



Creative

Ventures

And

Encounters

Jerry Flack

Tour Guide

Biography (Part II)

*'Biography is the only
true history.'*

Thomas Carlyle

In the last issue we discussed excellent biographies for children. Part II describes how these biographies can be used as tools for learning.

Today's creative students can not only find excellent biographies to read, their responses to their reading can be imaginative as well. The following are just a few of the creative prompts teachers and parents can give to challenge youth as they encounter first-rate biographies.

Each state is allowed two statues in the United States Capitol Building Rotunda. Colorado is one state that currently has only one statue in the Rotunda. Other states are also represented with just one statue. Based on their reading of biography, ask students to determine what person would be the best candidate for their state to enshrine. If the student's state of residence already has two statues, propose the following alternative. Congress has determined that not nearly enough women and minorities have been represented in the statuary of the U.S. Capitol Rotunda. Each state may add a new statue of a woman or a minority person. Whom should your state choose to honor?

Select a critical era (e.g., The 1960s; World War II; The Civil War) and help students locate a representative list of biographies of people who made a significant difference during the chosen time era. (Please note: a good reference librarian can be a

gifted student's best friend and resource.) Categories may include: artist, athlete, entrepreneur, environmentalist, entertainer, writer, statesperson, musician, mathematician, and scientist. Ask each student to read a biography of one of the subjects who lived in the chosen time period. Class discussions then can be built upon understandings of how people from various walks of life functioned within and viewed the same historical time frame.

Ask students to read two biographies about the same subject and use their skills of analysis and evaluation to assess the objectivity of the authors and to determine the relative merits of each work. For example, students might read the life of Louis Pasteur written by his son-in-law, Rene Vallery-Radot, and compare it to Paul DeKruif's more critical biography of Pasteur. Incidentally, when comparisons between two biographies or two lives are made, students have an excellent opportunity to employ the Venn diagram to graphically note similarities and differences.

Ask students to place themselves in the position of a biographical subject. Ask each reader to find a crisis situation where the subject had to resolve a conflict in which two rights were in opposition, making a completely satisfactory decision virtually impossible. How did this person resolve the conflict? How might the student have approached and handled the same conflict?

Introduce a bit of geography into a biography unit. Ask students to create passports for such interesting biographical subjects as Charles Darwin, Helen Keller, Winston Churchill, Christopher Columbus, and Jane Goodall.

As more and more students in class read biographies, begin a classroom (or school) letter exchange in which

(Continued on page 18)

from
parent

to
parent

Although he's only twelve, Robi Chakrabarti has helped develop innovative, commercially successful software not once, but twice. Together with his friends at Wondertree Learning Center in Vancouver, B.C., Robi has experienced the excitement and the realities of taking an idea from concept to finished product. Working on these collaborative ventures has been overwhelmingly positive, says Robi's mother, Loretta Unger.

"Robi has an intense interest and great skill in working with computers. These projects became a vehicle for perfecting his skills and at the same time helped him feel his work was worthwhile. His self-confidence and self-esteem have grown remarkably. Knowing that it's 'real stuff'—some-

thing that makes a difference—makes him feel very good about himself."

The kids at Wondertree were already becoming recognized for their inventive work with computers when they were invited by the Western Canada Wilderness Committee to develop an interactive game that would focus on the ecology of British Columbia's temperate rainforest. "The Carmanah Valley," which simulates a walk through the old-growth forest, was so successful that the following year Robi and his fellow students were asked to bid for a B.C. Hydro "Power Smart" initiative. The resulting program helps families reduce their power consumption—and asks them to commit the money saved to their children's education!

"The kids put in a lot of time, more perhaps than a 10- or 11-year old might reasonably be expected to commit to a project," Loretta continues. "They worked weekends, evenings, even during summer vacation. There was a certain amount of tedious work in getting things exactly right for commercial application. But that tedium was quite different from doing inappropriate, unchallenging work: it's the kind of day-to-day testing and retesting required in bringing out a product, and the children could see that it paid off in the end. It provided an insight into how things are done in the real world."

"Wondertree receives royalties from the products and Robi has his name in the credits," Loretta concludes, "but the real benefit is how the kids feel about their accomplishments and about themselves."

Mary Lynn Baum is past president of the Gifted Children's Association of British Columbia, Canada, and the parent of a highly gifted teenager.

Creative Ventures (Continued)

students who have read different biographies write letters to each other, assuming the identities of their favorite biographical subjects. "Henry Ford" can write a letter to "Georgia O'Keeffe" about his latest invention, the Model T.

Younger readers may enjoy being a biographical games detective. Ask a bright young reader to find out what kinds of games and entertainments her favorite biographical subject played when he or she was young. The student then engages in some original research, learns how to play the game, and teaches it to her contemporary classmates.

The world is a quilt. As a culminating classroom activity, following students' reading of many biographies, ask each student to create one square for the quilt that features the person she found most fascinating. Each square can symbolize at least one important event in the subject's life. Once the quilt is completed, students can use it as the focal point of a discussion about what can be learned from the study of biography.

Students can also create a biographical quilt about their chosen subject. Dramatic events, words, and symbols from the life can be highlighted in their

own drawings which can be stitched or fastened together to resemble a patchwork quilt.

Biography is a wonderful, challenging, eye-opening genre. Be sure your gifted children and adolescents have many creative journeys into the world of biography.

Stay tuned for autobiographies next time.

Jerry Flack, Ph.D., is a President's Teaching Scholar at the University of Colorado, and the author of *Inventing, Inventions, and Inventors*.



ANTENNA

Current Developments in Gifted Education

A grass-roots movement has taken hold in my town. It is spreading beyond Boulder, Colorado, and beyond gifted education.

The Parents and Schools Project opposes mandatory middle school philosophy, including a reduction in honors classes and elimination of ability grouping. The group supports all children's rights to academic challenge, asserting that academic excellence can be obtained by maximizing each student's potential.

When school districts and communities debate, ancillary concerns often arise to confuse the basic issues. An editorial in the local newspaper (1992) proclaims: "It is not a question of academic excellence or serving minorities, of the 'traditional' or the 'new,' of elitists against democrats. *The core question is, 'What is true education, and how can we provide it for every student?'*" "

If educators, school boards, parents and the business community can ever agree, or at least compromise, on what education really is, they still have to deal with the more complex issue of appropriately meeting each student's needs. Their decisions will be more effective if they include the voices of those who are most directly involved in and impacted by the educational process—students.

8th grader Molly Weller (1992) writes:
I think kids should have some input into this [school business]. It's our education. The adults have had theirs...

Cutting the honors program only adds problems. It doesn't solve them. Take math for instance. The kids who are better in math should be in a higher math class while the kids who need a little more help should be in a regular class. If you get them all in the same

class, the 'stronger' students are bored and the 'weaker' students can't keep up. It destroys the whole class and doubles the work for the teacher. It just doesn't make sense...

This is America. In America men and women have a say in the government. I believe that kids should have a say in anything that affects them. LET US SPEAK! (p.16A)

A grass-roots movement is taking hold, and it's about time. It is spreading far beyond one Western community, and beyond the limits of gifted education. It is a coalition of parents and teachers and students and business, and it supports excellence and individual differences and challenge and student potential. I hope it succeeds in time to salvage the minds of this generation of children.

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Dorothy Knopper is a private consultant on gifted education in Colorado and the publisher of *Understanding Our Gifted*.

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3rd Annual Workshop on Dabrowski's Theory of Emotional Development
June 24-28, 1992. This third annual 5-day intensive workshop will be held at Ashland University in Ohio. An exciting opportunity for anyone who craves intellectual stimulation and scholarship and who seeks an in-depth view of the inner world of giftedness. Instructors are Dr. Michael Piechowski, Dr. Linda Silverman, Dr. R. Frank Falk and Dr. Nancy Miller. Strands are available for beginners and for those who plan to conduct research with the theory. Contact Dr. Jane Piirto, Ashland University, Ashland, OH 44805. (419) 289-5379. Space is limited.

12th Annual Conference on Critical Thinking and Educational Reform
August 7-12, 1992. Over 300 distinguished experts in the field. Intensive preconference workshops August 7 & 8. Special discounts for groups and early registration. For more information contact Center for Critical Thinking and Moral Critique. Sonoma State University, Rohnert Park, CA 94928. (707) 664-2940.

Iowa Talented and Gifted Association: 20th Annual Conference
October 11-13, 1992, "Promises to Keep: Effective Practices in Gifted Education," will be held in Cedar Rapids, IA. For information, please contact: Clari Cejka, Educational Service Center, 346 Second Avenue SW, Cedar Rapids, IA 52404.

Advanced Development: A Journal on Adult Giftedness

The first journal on adult giftedness, *Advanced Development* focuses on inner development rather than achievement. Volume 4 on "The Self" is now available. The featured theorist is Roberto Assagioli and the moral exemplar is Peace Pilgrim. One-third larger than previous issues, this volume is packed with articles that will inspire you. (\$20 for individuals; \$30 for institutions.) See the order form on page 14 or contact ISAD, 777 Pearl St., Denver, CO 80203 (303) 837-8378.

FOCUS:
N E X T I S S U E
FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS
LIFE IN THE ASYNCHRONOUS FAMILY
Kathi Kearney
GEOMETRIC RELATIONSHIPS IN THE GIFTED FAMILY
Linda Powers Leviton
EARLY COLLEGE—A PARENT'S VIEW
Marcia Greason

*One hundred years from
now it will not matter what
kind of car I drove, what
kind of a house I lived in,
how much I had in my bank
account nor what my clothes
looked like. But the world
may be a little better because
I was important in the life of
a child.*

Anonymous

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July—August, 1992

Volume 4, Issue 6

Life in the Asynchronous Family

Katheryn Kearney

...Max has not only been highly gifted all of his life, but also somewhat adolescent all of his life...at 14, he can display a ferocious insistence for justice with the passions and tenacity of a 3-year-old...this gets confusing! We were told that at age 9 he displayed "cognitive reasoning skills way beyond his years." I wish he came with a blinking sign on his forehead to let me know just who I am dealing with: the 3-year-old, the 14-year-old, or the 25-year-old.

Last summer an ill-placed golf ball landed in the bedroom of a house adjoining a picturesque lighthouse. (Remind me to ask how this boy could ignore the physics of playing golf in a densely populated suburban neighborhood.) As glass went crashing, his highly gifted buddy was heard to have prayed, "Thank God it wasn't me!" I heard myself asking Max, again and again, "What were you thinking?"

That's the thing—they think when you least expect them to, and go blank at the most inopportune times. My guess

(Continued on page 8)

FOCUS ON:

FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS

SPECIAL FEATURE

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Geometric Relationships in the Gifted Family

Linda Powers Leviton

Eight-year-old Janice comes home in tears because her teacher had remarked that she's "too smart for her own good." Janice's mother, absolutely distraught, angrily confronts the principal of the school.

At age 6, Aaron is so mature that his parents take him with them everywhere, including social and educational events where he is the only child present. In fact, Aaron pretty much decides what the family will or won't attend and when they should leave.

Alyssa, already a talented pianist at age 4, is confused about why her mother pushes her to perform at every opportunity, while her older brother, who also plays, is never asked.

Janice, Aaron and Alyssa are all gifted children living in families that accommodate to their particular needs. In the late sixties, family theorists began to view the family as a system. They applied established models and specialized vocabulary (from the fields of science and mathematics) to understand the dynamics of individuals

(Continued on page 13)

FROM THE EDITOR

As summer comes to a close, and we turn our attention back to the school year, we need to remember that the greatest education a child receives year round is in the family. We may try to mold our children or we may give them carte blanche to become whatever they are bent on being; regardless of our parenting styles, our children learn daily how to be in the world from observing **who we are**, not from listening to what we tell them to do. A little scary, isn't it! Every child is another mirror of some recognized or unrecognized aspects of ourselves.

Living with gifted children is exciting and exhausting. From infancy, gifted youngsters often seem to need less sleep than their parents, crave constant stimulation, react intensely to most everything, have trouble understanding why their bodies can't keep up with their minds, and have special educational needs that may not be recognized. In this issue, we explore some of the unique issues faced by families of gifted children.

In "Life in the Asynchronous Family," Kathi Kearney takes on the difficult challenge of demonstrating how giftedness in the child—defined as asynchronous development—affects all members of the family, relationships of the family with society, and even the family life cycle. It remains for future writers to explore how developmental asynchrony affects the individual throughout the life cycle.

Linda Powers Leviton, our cartoonist, looks at families of the gifted through the lens of family systems theory. She illustrates the principles of this theory with vignettes of three problems that can arise in raising gifted children. Her article concludes with guidelines for healthy family relations.

Our special feature is a poignant personal account by Marcia Greason of her 16-year-old daughter's first day at college. We are fortunate to be able to reprint "Early College—A Parent's View" from *Highly Gifted Children*.

One thing tougher than being a gifted child is being the parent of a gifted child. Raising any type of exceptional child adds complexity to family life. Parents of gifted children, just like the parents of any other exceptional child, deserve to be taken seriously. They need understanding and support from responsive teachers and counselors who are willing to assist them in solving the perplexing problems encountered in raising gifted children.

Linda Silverman

Understanding Our Gifted

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Publisher

Dorothy Knopper

Editor

Dr. Linda Kreger Silverman

Cartoonist

Linda Leviton

Column Editors

Mary Lynn Baum, *Parent, Vancouver, British Columbia*

Dorothy Knopper, *Private Consultant for the Gifted, Boulder, Colorado*

Dr. Deirdre Lovecky, *Clinical Psychologist, Providence, Rhode Island*

Dr. Karen C. Nelson, *Emporia State University, Emporia, Kansas*

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HIDDEN GIFTED LEARNER

Standing On The Shoulders of Giants—Part 1

This one begins with a book, *The Dragon in the Cliff* (Cole, 1991). The story is based on meager historical documents and a Day Book, and describes the fictionalized life of Mary Anning, a young woman whose accomplishments in paleontology have almost been lost to us. Anning, in her early childhood, learned to hunt fossils—then called "curiosities"—with her father, who soon died. While Anning was hunting fossils to sell, she came upon a large fossil embedded in the rock cliffs near her home. At age 13, she had discovered the first intact ichthyosaur fossil. This was subsequently sold to the local squire who was later credited with its discovery. Anning went on to make other discoveries and to explore questions she had formulated about the fossils she discovered. These questions were important because they led others to develop better models of geological and paleontological change.

Anning's discoveries took place in the early nineteenth century, just about the time Charles Darwin was born and about 50 years before the voyages of the Beagle. Usually when we think of evolution, the discoveries and formulations of Darwin are most credited with changing the way scientists, and later more everyday people, came to think. Einstein and the theory of relativity is another example of such a paradigm shift.

Paradigm shifts are seen to occur suddenly, are based on the genius of a particular person, and result in a shift in an entire domain of thinking. Feldman (1991) discusses the

relationship of such shifts to giftedness, creativity and genius, a subject of much importance to those involved in gifted education.

Scientific discovery is often viewed as the endeavor of one genius, usually male. This person gains eminence for his work, as if he alone accomplished all the pieces that went into the final theory or discovery. Yet, few creative accomplishments are really the sole work of one genius (Weisberg, 1986). Hidden in the seemingly unique accomplishment is the work of all the gifted people who came before. Some of these contributed products; others, process in the form of critical questions, formulations and ideas—some of which might have led down blind alleys. Yet, all are important in the final outcome. Thus, when we view the accomplishments of scientific geniuses, we might remember that they have a clearer view of the horizon partly because they stand on the shoulders of other giants before them, most of whom are never recognized.

Darwin is credited with much of the insight into the evolution of species. It is often forgotten that much knowledge about evolution was already known when he set off on his voyages. For example, curiosity collectors and fossil diggers already knew about extinct animals, and had hypothesized some of the causes of extinction. They knew that traits are passed on from one generation to the next and that changes in the environment might have ramifications for particular species. They also speculated that

there were probably series of fossils going from ancestors to modern day versions of many animals. The work of Anning and of other gifted people of her time is part of the more complete insights and formulation of Darwin's theory of evolution.

In gifted education today, there is a trend towards focusing on products, and giftedness consists of those behaviors which lead towards production of specific end products. However, Anning is considered gifted, not because she found the fossil; indeed, anyone could have done so, but because she recognized its importance. The process of questioning and hypothesizing in which she engaged is reflective of her high intelligence. In fact, her accomplishments were major enough to be stolen from her and credited to men of far less imagination.

Part 2 will further explore the concepts of genius and giftedness and how they affect gifted education.

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Deirdre V. Lovecky, Ph.D., is a licensed clinical psychologist in private practice in Providence, RI, and a frequent author of articles on giftedness in children and adults.

PARENTING

How Do You Spell "Relief"?

How do you spell "relief"? G-O-I-N-G H-O-M-E! Yesterday we spent almost an hour learning ten spelling words. I did it in ten minutes. Then we learned how to multiply by threes. Yawn! Then we did something really wonderful! We put a lighted match on the bottom of a glass bottle with a narrow opening on the top and stuck a hard boiled egg in it. In a minute the egg fell into the bottle, even though the opening was too small. The match had used up all the oxygen and created a vacuum which pulled in the egg. That was so much fun. I LOVED it more than anyone else in the class, except maybe Carol. Sometimes I feel as though I don't belong here. Most of the time being different doesn't bother me. But by the end of the day I can hardly wait to get home. I can tell my Mom and Dad all about my day. I can curl up in front of the TV and relax. If I couldn't go home I probably couldn't stand it.

You would never know all this because in school I am such an angel, and at home I can be a devil. Sometimes I get so frustrated I even yell at my Mom. Like the other day when I was walking home with Gretchen and Sue and we met this homeless guy who wanted us to give him money. I gave him the quarter I had. I felt sooooo sorry for him. He just wouldn't leave my mind. Gretchen and Sue said they felt sorry too, but they didn't want me to talk about it. I felt irritated and alone. It had been raining all day. I was wet. I couldn't wait to talk to my Mom about it. But when I came home she said, "You're soaked! Why didn't you wear your raincoat this morning?" So I yelled at her: "Because my skin is waterproof and my inside feels dry and my clothes will dry. Just leave me alone!" and then I started to cry. And you know, that felt good and I could let go of all my tension and my Mom listened to me. Home is where you can cry. And Mom and Dad, I love you and really need you.

Love Lisa, Your Strange Kid.

What is the most important factor in the life of a gifted child? Happiness? Success? Friends? Stimulation? Freedom to grow? Developing their potential? My answer often surprises people. The most important factor in the lives of gifted children is the family. It is also the basic and original learning environment. The family is the hub of their existence, the basis of their security, the starting point from which to venture out into the world. Of course, this is important for all children, but for the gifted it is even more essential. At an early age many of them feel different; they feel like outsiders; their interests may not coincide with those of other children; they may use a different vocabulary; they may not feel understood; the school expectations may not fit their goals and aspirations. Some gifted children succeed in making a place for themselves within those expectations, but it is not a perfect fit; therefore, it often becomes a strain. In most

situations, they cannot totally relax and be themselves. Coming home to an understanding parent who empathizes with their uniqueness is more than a good feeling—it is a necessary part of their mental health.

Not all gifted children like to share with their parents. Some need their privacy and appreciate not being pressured to communicate. Home is a place where children feel permission to be themselves, where they know that they will be loved in spite of all their ups and downs, where they don't have to put on an act to fit in. For the gifted, relief needs to spell

F-A-M-I-L-Y.

Dr. Annemarie Roeper is a consultant on the gifted in Oakland, CA, and author of the book, *Educating Children for Life*. Co-founder of the Roeper City and Country School and the *Roeper Review*, Annemarie has inspired a worldwide focus on global awareness in gifted education.





INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES

Karen C. Nelson

Family Values and Multicultural Education

It's an election year and "family values" rhetoric once again is being served up by politicians who apparently find this safer and easier than tackling more tangible problems of economics, environment and education. It would be *apropo* for gifted education facilitators to create a unit on family values in American culture.

When I lived in a *barrio* neighborhood for a year where my blonde daughters were the only Anglo children for many blocks around and Spanish was spoken more often than English, I was impressed by how clean and beautiful the children seemed to be. The average income was at the poverty level and the high school dropout rate was nearly 70%, but the work ethic was strong. Neighborhood churches were still a factor of influence, family ties were strong, and our household of *gringas* was treated with kindness by the near neighbors.

Were I designing a unit on Family Values in America, I would look at it from a multicultural perspective. I would ask students to look for statements on family from Native Americans, African Americans, Asian Americans, Latinos and mainstream Euro-Americans—and see what

comparisons could be made between and among groups.

Here's an example: In the inaugural issue of *Teaching Tolerance*, there is a short article by a 15-year-old Navaho-American artist, Rolland Lee, who is 10th grade class president, a singer, actor, basketball player and yearbook editor. As Rolland discusses his heritage and paintings, he says,

Most of the people here are not rich, but they work hard. My mother is a school teacher, and my father works in an oil field. They are both nice people and tell me to stay on top of my goals. (p. 46)

We keep our family together by doing lots of things. If somebody lets go, we bring them back in; make them feel like they belong. (p. 47)

My grandmother's house makes me feel free. . . . To me, she is a wise person who gives a lot of advice and listens to me. . . . She's my teacher, guidance counselor and my friend.

While I paint, I think of my grandmother. She allows me to think. While I work on my art, I always put a part of her or her life into it. (pp. 46-47)

The students could engage in a unit on **My Family Values** and complete statements of their own that parallel Rolland's such as:

*My parents tell me. . . .
We keep our family together by. . . .
When someone lets go we. . . .
My grandmother's house makes me feel. . . .
To me, my grandmother is. . . .
While I (paint, create) I think of. . . .*

Students could be asked if mainstream values are "best" based on the evidence they assemble or they could choose from the diverse groups a composite of values they judged to be the best for our nation. The greatest value of such a unit might be the insights and appreciation gained for multicultural American groups often looked at only through the lens of pejorative stereotypes.

Teaching Tolerance, if you don't already know about it, is a wonderful new educational publication designed to provide teachers with resources and ideas to help promote justice and equity and break down prejudice.

The Spring, 1992, issue, besides containing Rolland Lee's article and pictures of his paintings, includes an interview with Robert Coles (author of the *Spiritual Life of Children*) and other articles on helping students cut to the core of racial and ethnic stereotypes.

A free Civil Rights Teaching Kit was also offered containing a documentary video, award-winning publication with historical photos and personal profiles of those who died during the civil rights movement, and detailed lesson plans.

Teaching Tolerance is published twice a year by the Southern Poverty Law Center. Use it with your gifted students and share it with your whole school. This first issue is available free of charge. Send your request to: **Teaching Tolerance, 400 Washington Avenue, Montgomery, Alabama, 36104.**

REFERENCE

Lee, R. (1992). Becoming Navaho. *Teaching Tolerance*, 1(1), 46-47.

Karen C. Nelson, Ph.D., is Coordinator of the graduate program in gifted education at Emporia State University in Kansas. She has been a public school teacher, curriculum editor, writer and poet.

THE READING ROOM

Welcome to the reading room, and a discussion of a single book that could be, for some children, a life-changing experience. Recently, a man began trying to buy space in college newspapers for an ad which claims that the Holocaust of the 1940's never happened. Controversy rages on campuses where his material has been printed. Young people with little historical education and no personal memories of the Vietnam era, let alone the Second World War, are vulnerable to the lies of bigots and haters no matter how far-fetched and dangerous. As the generation of Holocaust survivors ages and dies, the living memory of one of the largest and most successful twentieth century attempts at genocide disappears.

Jane Yolen's novel, *The Devil's Arithmetic*, aimed at middle grade/young adult readers, is a powerful antidote to the extinction of memory and truth. The child who reads this book does not simply learn facts and figures to offset ignorance; the child who reads this book lives the experience of one child, one village, one small group of "real" human beings caught up in the horror of an age. And yet, the book is not about death and hatred; it is about life, about love and survival and memory.

Hannah is a contemporary Jewish child, whose family is not deeply religious. They celebrate traditional holidays in their own way, though, and Hannah chafes at the enforced family gatherings. She never knows when her strange grandfather may suddenly begin shouting, raising his

tattooed forearm at unseen enemies. No one seems willing, or able, to put aside the memories of events that took place long before Hannah's birth. She can't understand why they still talk about concentration camps that became history so long ago. "I'm tired of remembering," Hannah complains.

Then, sent to open the door for the Prophet, Elija, during the Seder on the first night of Passover, Hannah unaccountably walks into another time and another place. She finds herself in a small village in Poland in 1942, with people who call her Chaya. They are her only family, they tell her, since her parents died of fever in Lublin. They (and she) are speaking Yiddish. At first she tries to explain that she comes from New Rochelle, not Lublin, but they think she is merely confused from her own bout with the fever. They are busy with plans and preparations for a wedding. Little by little, Hannah is pulled into their world so thoroughly that she begins to have trouble remembering her own.

On the day of the wedding, when the parade of family and friends reach the village temple, Nazi trucks are waiting for them. In moments their peaceful village life is shattered; they are herded into trucks and then into train cars that carry them to a concentration camp.

Yolen details death and survival in the camp with compelling reality. Chaya (a Hebrew name that means life) learns to identify herself with the number tattooed on her arm—J197241—but hangs onto her name, the remnants of her new family, the friend who teaches her how to survive. With each individual death, she learns that memory holds onto life, and that even in the midst of horror a remnant of true humanity inevitably survives.

Yolen's fantasy is put together like a brilliantly crafted puzzle box. Hannah/Chaya returns to New Rochelle and her real family with a new sense of belonging, an understanding of the value of life and a permanent will to remember. This is a book to be shared!

Stephanie Tolan, from Columbus, Ohio, is a noted author of children's books and one of the authors of the award-winning book, *Guiding the Gifted Child*.



KALEIDOSCOPE

Growing Up, Apart, Away

Most articles written about family relationships involving gifted children focus on do's and don'ts of parenting. We are told to be good listeners, we are urged to be patient with endless questions, and nonjudgmental in our remarks. We are reminded that gifted children share many of the same social and emotional needs as all children, but we are also told that special talents need special attention.

The advice we get (or give) is intended to be useful, and quite often, it is. But, truth be told, much of the advice bears a greater resemblance to common sense than to complex theory; what we hear, what we absorb as truth, often simply verifies our own "gut level" feelings or beliefs.

But there are some areas of family relationships that stay unaddressed, and where advice is seldom offered, because the answers—even the issues—are nebulous. One of these issues involves the dilemma of "displacement": the phenomenon that occurs when gifted children (or adolescents, or adults) "outgrow" their family's attitudes, beliefs or interests.

Consider these two examples of displacement. Ten-year-old Maggie rebels against the religion classes her parents require her to attend weekly. "I don't believe what the teacher tells me to believe, and when I argue with him he just tells me to be quiet," Maggie says. "And when I tell my parents my feelings, they just tell me I'm too young to know what my beliefs really are."

Or, 17-year-old Jay, a young man from small-town America who leaves to attend college in a larger, more cosmopolitan region. For the first time in his life, Jay is exposed fully to new, sometimes contrary ideas. To his new classmates, Jay's notions are "quaint"; he is humored by others who see him as a "breath of fresh air." Jay is accepted over time and begins to assimilate new ideas and lifestyles into his old ones. However, Jay's return home at semester break reveals to him that he now seems to share little in common with his family and hometown friends. Some think that Jay is getting "too big for his britches," but Jay sees it differently. He can't wait to return to campus.

Both Maggie and Jay are struggling with a dilemma that pits them against that most feared of institutions: family. They may begin to wonder if, indeed, they are the turncoats or snobs others accuse them of being. These feelings of independence may be accompanied by fear ("Maybe I am wrong?") or anger ("Why can't I just accept things like everybody else does?") or guilt ("A good son/daughter wouldn't act this way."). The problem comes in trying to find an "unbiased someone" to sit with Jay or Maggie and just let them talk. A distant friend or relative may serve in this role, as can a teacher or counselor who can listen and help clarify the mixed emotions that Jay or Maggie are feeling. Usually, "quick and dirty" remedies won't apply here, because no one is doing anything wrong; each is merely responding honestly from his or her individual base of reality.

Growing up, apart, away is not necessarily a one-way route, although it may appear so at first. Gradually, given time and thought by all involved, connections that appeared severed may be reattached, and divisive issues that once seemed monumental may be put into a perspective that allows for the basic right of "agreeing to disagree." But gifted individuals, who may experience the angst of separation earlier or more deeply than others, must learn to recognize that growth and change are sometimes accompanied by inner turmoil—for themselves and their families.

Jim Delisle, Ph.D., is Associate Professor of Gifted Child Education at Kent State University. He is President of The Association for the Gifted (TAG) and the author of five books.

*He can't accept himself as is,
He always seems to criticize.
He's driven by perfection's force,
A foe not always recognized.
His every error, every flaw
Is magnified and analyzed.
To sense of failure I see
He's ever more so sensitized.*

*If only he could see himself
As he is seen through other eyes.
To every challenge large or small
He takes the risk and always tries.
And so to every gifted child
When in frustration his soul cries,
My need to help him see himself
As one of worth, intensifies.*

Becky Whittenburg

is that it's the tension of being caught between all those ages I just mentioned. But I don't think my theory would be supported in a textbook, even though I live by it every day in order to give some organized definition to what's going on. (Estes, 1992, p. 3)

While most families watch their children proceed through childhood with Gesell-like efficiency, following the expected sequence through the normal developmental stages described in books such as Dr. Spock's *Baby and Child Care*, families of intellectually gifted children often have a very different experience. These children experience great discrepancies between their cognitive, social, emotional, and physical development. Hollingworth (1942) noted that "To have the intelligence of an adult and the emotions of a child combined in a childish body is to encounter certain difficulties" (p. 282). The Columbus Group (1991) proposed an emerging phenomenological definition of giftedness with the concept of asynchronous development at its core:

...Giftedness is asynchronous development in which advanced cognitive abilities and heightened intensity combine to create inner experiences and awareness that are qualitatively different from the norm. This asynchrony increases with higher intellectual capacity. The uniqueness of the gifted renders them particularly vulnerable and requires modifications in parenting, teaching, and counseling in order for them to develop optimally. (The Columbus Group, 1991)

Tolan (1992) asserts that such asynchronous development "puts the gifted person outside normal developmental patterns from birth" (p. 8). Asynchronous development in the child can also introduce asynchrony into the entire family system and into the family's sociocultural mediation with the larger community.

A Vygotskian Perspective

Any mother of a 6-year-old gifted child who has found herself explaining the rudiments of algebra in detail one minute, and despairing that the same child will ever learn to tie his shoes the next, will appreciate Vygotsky's concept of the "zone of proximal development." Lev Vygotsky, a Soviet psychologist whose work spanned the time period from the 1917 Russian Revolution until his untimely death from tuberculosis in 1934, viewed learning as a social process of acculturation. He described the "zone of proximal development" as

Asynchronous development in the child can also introduce asynchrony into the entire family system.

the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers...Thus the notion of a zone of proximal development enables us to propound a new formula, namely that the only 'good learning' is that which is in advance of development. (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86, 89; cited in Bruner, 1985, p. 24)

Thus, the mother (or other adult) acts as a mediator for the child, "[arranging] the environment such that the child can reach higher or more abstract ground from which to reflect" (Bruner, 1985, p. 24).

Parents as Multi-level Mediators.

Most parents of normally developing children, of course, do not find themselves mediating algebra and shoe-tying at the same time in the same child. Parents of gifted children, however, may well find themselves in the role of "multi-level mediators" who must not only guide development that is progressing in an asynchronous manner within the child, but must also

act as mediators for the child within the larger culture of school and society, since the child's individual pattern of development does not match cultural norms. In the process, the usual patterns of family development may also shift.

Asynchrony Within the Gifted Child.

In the early years of the child's life the

parents may or may not realize that the child's developmental pattern is unusual. One mother of a highly gifted 4 year old thought

nothing of her daughter's phenomenal chess-playing ability until the child began to regularly beat her father at the game; "We all play chess at home—I didn't realize that other 4 year olds don't do this." On the other hand, many parents of extraordinarily gifted children are aware that their children are different even as infants, demonstrating remarkable powers of concentration, demanding cognitive stimulation, and acquiring language at much earlier ages than their peers, often speaking within the first few months of life and reading and writing by 2 or 3 years old.

We do not yet understand the full meaning of such an early initiation into language for intellectually gifted children.

Vygotsky considered the acquisition of language as the most significant moment in the course of cognitive development. When language begins to serve as a psychological instrument for the regulation of behavior, perception changes radically, new varieties of memory are formed, and new thought processes are created. (Blanck, 1990, p. 47)

Blanck's contention, based on the research of Vygotsky and Luria, suggests it is not just that the child who acquires language earlier simply "gets there sooner," but that the child's

thought processes are *fundamentally changed* with the initiation of this new tool.

A fundamental problem for families with gifted children is the question of what happens when two or more discrepant developmental levels collide. One mother described a scene in the grocery store with her highly gifted 2-year-old son. At a time when most 2 year olds are content to name items in the supermarket, Andrew had already initiated extensive discussions with his mother at home about the nutritional value of various products. As they were proceeding down the cereal aisle, Andrew, seated in the

grocery cart, spied three middle-aged women selecting sugared cereals with artificial colors. Before

Andrew's mother knew what had happened, three startled women turned around to see the 2 year old standing up in the grocery cart, shaking his finger, and lecturing, "*Put those back! Put those back! Don't you realize that cereal is bad for you? It is mostly sugar, and contains artificial flavors and colors!*" Andrew's intellectual and language development were far beyond that of most 2 year olds. His social cognition, however, had not caught up with his intellectual prowess; he did not yet know that it was not polite to lecture strangers in the supermarket.

Yet this same child's intellectual advancement, ironically, also left him outside normal social interaction with same-age peers. His desire for precision in language was incomprehensible to other 2 year olds during social discourse; they simply did not understand the language he was able to use so fluently and well. A

frustrated Andrew listened to his playmate repeat, "*Truck! Truck!*" each time Andrew brought out his favorite toy. Finally Andrew, his patience at an end, snatched the truck away with the words, "*It is not a truck! It is a front-end loader!*"

Andrew's parents face a dilemma unique to parents of gifted children. They must recognize, first, that Andrew's pattern of development is both unusual **and** is *normal* for him. Second, they must respond to all those ages at once. In Vygotskian terms, Andrew's family must be constantly aware not only of the rapidly changing "zone of proximal development" in

Vygotsky considered the acquisition of language as the most significant moment in the course of cognitive development.

Andrew's cognitive, social, emotional, and physical structures, but they must also decide

how to mediate when discrepancies occur, and what to do when several developmental levels collide. Taking the truck away from another toddler is socially expected behavior for a 2 year old; Andrew's underlying reason for doing so was not.

When Andrew and his friend play, how much should Andrew, at age 2, be expected to adapt to his friend's zone of proximal development in language? Is it even possible for him to do so? Who is a "more capable peer" for Andrew? With older children, should an emotionally sensitive 8 year old who reads at a college level be allowed to read *Uncle Tom's Cabin* or is it too riveting? Should a 14-year-old college freshman be allowed to date 19-year-old classmates? The answers are as individual as the children and their circumstances. In some cases there may not be any good answers, when "zones of proximal development"

within the same child are at widely disparate levels.

Asynchrony in the Family System

Giftedness is a family affair.

Discrepancies in an individual child's development affect siblings, parents, and extended family members as well as the child, and educational options have repercussions that can reverberate throughout the family system and across generations. This should not be surprising; recent work with families of children with disabilities (Fewell & Vadasy, 1986) illustrates the impact of a child's exceptionality on the entire family system. Indeed, this impact was deemed so great and the importance of family support so crucial to the young child with disabilities that a new federal law (P. L. 99-457) mandating free public services for infants and toddlers with disabilities also mandates that an "Individual Family Services Plan" be developed, drawing on the family's own strengths and needs.

Effects on Siblings. The asynchronous development of an intellectually gifted child adds a variable that can change or radically alter the child's place in the family system—for example, when a younger sibling surpasses an older one in achievement. School acceleration, an increasingly popular educational option for gifted children, introduces potential minefields of asynchrony into the family. While it is often the best educational option available for a gifted child, families need to be sensitive to the perspective of siblings.

The 12 Gilbreth children, described in the popular book, *Cheaper By the Dozen* (Gilbreth & Carey, 1948/1963), understood this all too well. In the chapter entitled "Skipping Through School," they described one predicament:

The standard reward for skipping was a new bicycle. None of us used to like to jump grades, because it meant making new friends and trailing behind the rest of the class until we could make up the work. But the bicycle incentive was great, and there was always the fear that a younger brother or sister would skip and land in your class. That would be the disgrace supreme. So whenever it looked as if anyone down the family line was about to skip, every older child would study frantically so that he could jump ahead, too. (p. 60).

As the Gilbreth children note, older siblings may feel that their "place" in the family or the school is at risk as a result of the rapid advancement of a younger sibling.

Younger, equally gifted siblings in a family of gifted children and adults sometimes feel that they can't keep up, not realizing that it is often their chronological age, rather than their intellectual ability, which keeps them from participating in the activities of older siblings and adults in the family. Six-year-old Anna had a 9-year-old highly gifted sister who attended a local college. At the same time, her father was working on a master's degree and her mother was taking courses part-time toward her bachelor's degree. One day, Anna's mother discovered Anna sobbing in her room. When asked what was wrong, Anna blurted out, "I'm the dumb one in this family. I'm the only one in this family who's not in college!" Anna was far from "dumb"; with an extremely high IQ and formidable musical talent evident even at the age of 6, she was certainly gifted. But her perspective as the younger sibling in a family where all the other members were college students, including the 9-year-old, led her to think otherwise. Her mother wisely talked with Anna about the talents and abilities already evident in Anna's life and about the limitations of chronological age and physical development.

Play patterns among gifted siblings is another arena where asynchronous family development is sometimes evident. Hollingworth (1942) noted the tendency of highly gifted children to "organize the play into a complicated pattern, with some remote and definite goal" (p. 274). If these children are placed in heterogeneous, rigidly age-graded classrooms in school with no opportunity to associate with gifted peers for academic and social activities, it may appear to their teachers that they do not "socialize well" with other children. In addition, if they complicate the play to the point where other children literally cannot play with them, they will not be surrounded by playmates at recess. But within the family, they may spend hours and hours with gifted siblings of varying ages participating in imaginative, extremely complex play. During the 19th century, this would not have been unusual, since children spent much less time in school and much more time at home. Twentieth century society, however, features a much different pattern of expectations for family life. Thus, such closeness and creativity among gifted siblings sometimes is perceived negatively by schools and mental health professionals, placing the family on an asynchronous track according to the norms of contemporary culture.

Effects on Parenting. The asynchronous development of the gifted child and the educational strategies used to respond to high intellectual ability can have unexpected effects on parents individually and on the marital relationship. Three areas deserve particular consideration.

▲ *The "early empty nest."* Acceleration, often a strategy of choice for highly gifted students, also usually means that the child will leave home earlier and will enter the adult world sooner. In some ways, the

family life cycle is compressed and shortened. If the mother chose to stay home full-time to raise her family, she may find that the gifted child's academic acceleration has also accelerated her own need to advance in her career or begin a new job. Both parents will need to make adjustments within the marriage relationship that come with children leaving home—but they may need to do it much earlier than they expected, and sometimes earlier in their own development as individuals and as a couple than would be ideal.

▲ *Extended financial dependence.* Unfortunately, the "early empty nest" does not always bring with it early financial independence from parents. In fact, the "early empty nest" may increase financial dependence at the same time that the gifted adolescent or young adult needs to begin his or her separation from the family. Some very young accelerants are not old enough to obtain working papers, although their college financial aid packages assume that they will seek summer and school-year employment. Graduate school for a very bright student is encouraged and expected in today's society, and for many careers it is an absolute necessity. The cost is often astronomical, even with the aid of grants and scholarships. As a result, the gifted young person often remains partially financially dependent on the family, at a time when most of his or her chronological age peers are working at steady full-time jobs. The extended (and often necessary) financial dependence of a gifted child affects the other siblings and the life cycle of the family. While other parents are actively saving for retirement, families of gifted children often find themselves continuing to help pay for college. Such a situation results in family asynchrony on many levels, as the realities of life in the gifted family differ substantially from those in the larger society.

▲ *Postponement or denial of grandparenting.* Lengthy graduate studies coupled with the energy necessary to establish oneself in a career may lead to a postponement of marriage and childbearing. (In this situation, accelerants benefit: The time they save allows graduate study and career establishment at a younger age, and also allows them to establish families earlier should they wish to do so.) The many options available for bright women in today's society means that some of them do not marry, some have no children, and many others marry and have children much later than their mothers did. While other families are enjoying new grandchildren, families of the gifted may feel that this part of the family life cycle is being delayed or denied.

Asynchrony in the Larger Society

Families of gifted children find that they not only must deal with asynchronous development on the homefront, but that the advanced and uneven development of their children means that they must become mediators between their children and the larger society, gradually teaching their children how to use these mediation skills themselves. Institutions such as schools, government bureaucracies, informal networks in the neighborhood and community, and the images in popular culture seldom reflect the reality of the inner life of gifted children and their families. Hollingworth (1942) felt that the problems that arise from uneven development pertained

...chiefly to the period in the life of the gifted child before he is twenty years of age; for the problems of the person of superior intellect tend to be less numerous as he grows older and can use his intelligence independently in gaining control of his own life. (p. 267)

Since the years prior to age 20 are precisely those years when the gifted child is most likely to be home, families of gifted children are likely to find themselves on the frontlines as they face the realities of their child's—and family's—asynchrony within the larger society. As one mother expressed succinctly, the most difficult thing about raising her highly gifted son was "explaining the world to him and explaining him to the world."

Schooling. By far the most difficult, continuous, and frustrating activity required of parents of gifted children is finding appropriate educational environments. Parents of the gifted are thrust into an advocacy role, one that is almost always dependent on the good will of local school officials and the status of the latest educational "reform." Unlike families of children with disabilities, parents of the gifted do not have the benefit of a federal mandate protecting their child's right to a free and appropriate public education. Instead, they are put in a most difficult position which requires them to constantly advocate for their child and for the very existence of educational programs for the gifted; to ignore the situation and hope everything turns out all right; or, for those with financial means, to "do it themselves" through enrichment classes outside of school, summer programs, tutorials, and home-schooling. The inequity of this arrangement for economically disadvantaged families is obvious, but the added family stress such choices place on families of gifted children from all socioeconomic levels reflects the extent of the discrepancy between the needs of the gifted child and the reality of most American schools today.

Furthermore, giftedness in parents (especially giftedness that was not acknowledged in childhood) can also affect the advocacy process. Tolan

(1992) describes the

emotional intensity [that] occurs when parents, often unaware of it themselves, experience feelings on two levels—as parents and as the powerless children they themselves once were. They may feel an overwhelming need to fix for their children what they could not fix for themselves. (p. 9)

At a time when these parents most need to help their gifted children access appropriate educational opportunities, deal with asynchronous development, and understand the social and emotional concomitants of giftedness, they must also face their own giftedness, often for the first time.

Bureaucracies. Most Americans experience some degree of asynchrony with the ubiquitous bureaucracies that are part of modern life. Families of the gifted, however, are in for some particularly interesting surprises. Chronological age limitations are the norm in contemporary life, and some of them are sensible, such as those restricting driving and drinking. Other restrictions make little sense, and may range from a mere annoyance (a preschool child reading on a 5th grade level is refused permission to participate in the library's readathon designed for school-aged children) to outright discrimination (under many state laws, a 7th grade student who takes math courses at the high school is not eligible to receive high school graduation credits). Nor are such difficulties limited to government or school bureaucracies; one mother of a gifted 4 year old recounted her battle with a popular toy manufacturer which had refused to let her son join the company's club for older children, although he consistently played with the building materials designed for 9 and 10 year olds, with exceptional skill.

The Community. Contrary to prevailing stereotypes of the "pushy

parent," many families of gifted children feel that they cannot share their child's progress through the developmental stages of childhood within the community's informal network of neighbors and relatives. They express this reluctance privately and with sadness, and usually only within the confines of the immediate family or in the safety of the company of other parents of gifted children. This situation is similar to the experiences of families of children with disabilities (Fewell & Vadasy, 1986). Both groups of parents are often denied what is a normal developmental experience of parenthood for other families.

The religious community to which the family belongs usually has no formal arrangements for the instruction of intellectually gifted children as they develop spiritually. Yet, Hollingworth (1942) noted:

When we observe young gifted children, we discover that religious ideas and needs originate in them whenever they develop to a mental level past "twelve years mental age." Thus they show these needs when they are but eight or nine years old, or earlier. The higher the IQ the earlier does the pressing need for an explanation of the universe occur, the sooner does the demand for a concept of the origin and destiny of the self appear. (p. 280)

The gifted child with deep, fundamental religious questions needs the support of the religious community and the family as he or she struggles with issues that form part of the foundation of the personality. In many cases, the child will be struggling with concepts that are difficult even for adults. Some church and synagogue communities have responded to advanced spiritual development in the gifted child by providing multi-age religious instruction classes, allowing these children to attend adult classes, allowing the child to join the religious faith at a younger age than is customary, or providing an opportunity for the child to explore

individual religious questions and concerns in discussion with the minister, priest, rabbi, or imam. Advanced spiritual development is fraught with asynchrony; there will be issues which the gifted child will comprehend intellectually and spiritually, but will be less prepared to handle emotionally.

Images in Popular Culture. It should not be surprising that many images in popular culture do not reflect the inner realities of gifted children or adults. Popular culture today is a creation of mass-marketing, a distinctively 20th-century invention. Corporate financial decisions often drive the development of new products or the sponsorship of television programs, and such decisions, to be profitable, must appeal to the widest possible audience. It is surprising under these circumstances that a television show such as "Doogie Howser, M. D." thrives. In the first episode of the ABC network program, aired on September 22, 1989, Doogie, the 16-year-old physician, writes in his journal, "Kissed my first girl. Lost my first patient. Life will never be the same again." That these images exist at all in popular culture today, and provide such rich opportunities to demonstrate the complex realities that discrepancies in development mean for gifted children growing up, is encouraging.

The Asynchronous Family: A Celebration

Raising any family in the 1990's is not an easy task. Families of gifted children face some unusual challenges, and also some unexpected joys, as they play the hand they are dealt. Language use, the complexity of relationships, moral and spiritual development, and the family's relationship with the larger society are all changed by the presence of intellectually gifted children and parents within the family crucible.

Mediation will be different in these families, for the "zones of proximal development" are continually changing, shifting, expanding, and colliding with each other. The key to coping may well be acceptance—acceptance that the asynchronous development which is a hallmark of intellectual giftedness is normal for that child's individual developmental trajectory. With that kind of acceptance comes not only a deeper understanding of the resulting asynchrony in the family life cycle, but a celebration, as we recognize the uniqueness of the individual and the diversity and power of family life to transform and to mediate as well as to comfort and protect.

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Kathi Kearney, M.A.Ed., is Founder of the Hollingworth Center for Highly Gifted Children in South Casco, Maine, a doctoral candidate at Teachers College, Columbia University, and editor of *Highly Gifted Children*.

in their family systems. Geometric-sounding terms like interlocking triangles, concentric circles, boundaries, symmetric relationships, rules and metarules—were used to describe ways in which families generally interact. However, understanding a particular family system is an elusive task. Each family system is an entity in itself. *It takes three people to get anywhere in Aaron's family and Janice's includes outsiders, figures of authority.*

In any system, the parts influence the whole, and vice-versa. With any luck, the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. In a family system, members also depend upon relatively consistent and predictable interactions to accomplish the tasks of daily living. *Janice is counting on her mother to take action in response to her hurt feelings. Alyssa is prepared to perform at any time, since her mother usually requires it of her. Aaron's parents both know they can socialize with Aaron instead of strangers at social functions.* In each system, the gifted child became central to the concentric circles of family members and involved others.

The primary functional challenge of a family system is to move the family towards mutual goals—maximizing the potential of family members, raising children to adulthood or surviving the normal and abnormal stresses that occur during the life cycle process. These tasks require organization and communication, verbal and non-verbal. In the gifted family there may be exceptional demands made in these areas.

The greatest threat to the functioning of the family system is anxiety. In order to achieve its goals, the family system must develop a way to handle the anxiety that is generated both from within and without. *When Janice's communication with her teacher broke down, she brought her anxiety from school and shared it with her family*

system. Alyssa's confusion over the unequal treatment between herself and her brother is likely to generate anxiety. And it can be very stressful for a 6-year-old to be making decisions on behalf of the two adults who are responsible for taking care of him. Those geometric-sounding terms become functional depictions of the ways families are able to adjust to the tensions of living in their particular circumstances.

Families with gifted members face a challenge beyond the norm. Because different parts—physical, intellectual, emotional—of a gifted child may be maturing at markedly different rates, the gifted family must develop more flexible systems to accommodate this asynchronous development. *Aaron still is 6 years old in some ways, no matter how maturely he acts in others. Janice is more attuned to nuance than most 8 year olds so that her feelings are as sensitive as an adolescent's.* While normal life cycle events still occur, they may happen in an accelerated fashion or in an unexpected way. Creative solutions, the ability to take risks, and the way family members relate to each other will have a tremendous impact upon the mental health of the family, as well as upon individuals associating with the system. *If Alyssa is confused about her brother's exclusion, how must he feel?*

Back to geometry....what shape is your system? Sociologists look at family relationships in terms of circles of influence. Who is at the center of the circle and how are family members and others positioned in relation to this central figure. In many families, the gifted child automatically becomes the center of family attention. In the effort to meet the gifted child's needs, many outsiders may also move into a significant position within that sphere—psychologists, doctors, teachers, administrators, and mentors may all play a huge role in the family system. *Both Janice's teacher and the*

principal very quickly became principle players in the family drama of the day. As a family's circle of influence grows to include new members, more and more variables are introduced. Any changes are likely to influence relationships within the family.

What about the family with many children and/or multigenerational members who also covet that central family position to help manage their anxiety? Luckily, family systems tend to be fluid. Most families can, and must, adapt to major changes over time. Families develop internal structures that serve this purpose (Bowen, 1966). *Alyssa's brother may decide to find his own area of achievement, or act out in a negative way to receive attention comparable to Alyssa's.*

When two family members form a pair, as when people marry, or when strong bonds occur between mother and child (e.g., *Alyssa and her mother*), this becomes an important subsystem of the family. In times of calm, when there is no stress between the pair, it may appear stable. But, when tension builds, one or both will look outside of the dyad for relief from the anxiety. The smallest stable family subsystem is a triangle. That third member (*Alyssa's brother is the outsider*) will distract or diminish the anxiety. In gifted families an example of this triangulation might occur in response to the anxiety of helping the child reach his or her "full potential." The parental dyad may triangle with the gifted child to make sure achievements are "on schedule," or a teacher may become triangled with parent and child, as in Janice's family. Responsibility may then be passed away from the immediate family to the teacher, or to the school system.

Anxiety may also result from outside criticism of parenting style. *Aaron's relatives or neighbors may object to his inclusion at every event. Janice's*

mother may only give her positive reinforcement, while her father tends to focus on errors and criticizes her. This would make Janice particularly sensitive to her teacher's comments. If that were the case, Janice's parents may take turns being on the outside—"appreciating" mother might have a stronger emotional bond, while the child may identify intellectually with "critical" father. Janice may come to find that motivation, for her, must include avoidance of criticism. The criticism can eventually be internalized or replayed in new relationships with Janice's mentors, friends, spouses, employers and even with her own children. This is called the intergenerational transmission process.

All of the above may or may not be functional within a particular family. Different families require different solutions for dealing with its particular challenges. Bowen (Kerr and Bowen, 1988), describes health in terms of "differentiation of self." That is, the extent an individual is able to maintain his or her own individuality within the family system. Differentiation of self occurs both intrapsychically (being able to separate thinking and feeling internally), and interpersonally (as

when a person reacts emotionally on behalf of another, rather than remaining emotionally autonomous). Had Janice achieved a higher level of differentiation, she could have been hurt by her teacher's comment, but could temper the emotion through empathy and reason: "perhaps the teacher is threatened." If Janice's mother were more differentiated, she could validate Janice's feeling of hurt without taking it upon herself to "solve" the problem in an emotional outburst.

So what is healthy? Fogarty (1976) discusses characteristics of well-adjusted families:

- they are balanced and can adapt to change;
- emotional problems are seen as existing in the whole family, with components in each person;
- differences are tolerated, even encouraged;
- they use a minimum of fusion or distance (emotional or physical) to solve problems;
- they are generally connected within and across generations in balanced one-to-one relationships;
- each person can deal on both thinking and emotional levels with others;
- preservation of a positive emotional climate takes precedence over doing what is "right" or what is popular;

- members of the family use each other as sources of feedback and learning, not emotional crutches;
- each member thinks it's a pretty good family to live in.

Some of these areas may be especially difficult for families with gifted members.

Family relationships, especially in gifted families, require complex explicit and implicit organization. It is tempting to emphasize logic and intellect at the expense of emotional needs. But the emotional needs will have to be addressed somewhere, and the nature of individual relationships will determine the overall health of the family system.

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Linda Powers Leviton has worked with gifted families for 20 years and is in therapeutic practice at the California Study Center, North Hollywood, California.



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EARLY COLLEGE—A PARENT'S VIEW

Marcia Greason

The college interviews were great. Those warm colorful autumn days were filled with admissions people courting my 16-year-old daughter, Elizabeth. The process of comparing colleges and mapping out her college strategy was methodical yet exciting, all at the same time. The plan to apply for early decision to Mount Holyoke College and the backup plan in case early decision didn't pan out were in place. The acceptance was an early Christmas present.

High school graduation activities were a blur of excitement. There was the school district's all-night graduation party to plan and implement, the absolutely perfect dress to purchase, the gifts for all of her friends, the invitations to send, the small family party to plan before the new graduate left for the big party, and packing for her graduation trip. The old tear ducts began to rattle when my wonderful child received the scholar-athlete award. Not bad for a little person whose public school career just happened NOT to include grades seven and eight. The pride I felt at graduation was coupled with the relief that she not only survived but flourished in high school.

Preparing for the big day took most of the summer and likely could have been extended. There were the light moments, deciding how much underwear was enough. There were the serious moments, the discussions about the modern day worries like AIDS and the timeless worries like "Make sure you eat properly and take your vitamins." There were the moments that I would turn around and expect to see my little girl in pigtails dressed in her Oshkosh overalls

reaching for her Mickey Mouse lunch box and instead saw a young woman reaching for her own car keys. Those were some of the days that I felt cheated. It wasn't fair that her friends' parents got to have their precious children home for two more years than I did. Knowing intellectually that she had carved her own path and seemed to be happy didn't touch those emotions that come with motherhood. Those two years just seemed to evaporate.

The big day arrived. The car was bursting with necessities. The chatter going down was light, happy and carefree. My heart sunk when shortly after we arrived on campus, my daughter turned to me and said, "Mom, what am I doing here?" All those insecurities came rushing in. Were all those well-meaning people right? Had we pushed her? Was she really ready to be at college at just barely 16?

We got her room assignment and keys and headed for her dorm to unpack. The dorm was full of young women, many appearing less ready for this experience than Elizabeth. The young women seemed to form a bond immediately. When we could find no reason to stay any longer, we kissed our precious daughter good-bye and were on our way back to Maine. I was pretty composed; we stopped at a fruit stand on the way back and then about 20 minutes into the trip, I turned to my husband and said, "I'm going to cry now." And cry I did.

I was crying because I missed her already. I was crying because I was leaving one of my best friends. I was crying because it wasn't fair, and I was crying just because I was crying.

Looking at that empty bedroom when we got home brought on another jumble of emotions and more tears.

Six months have passed since those emotion filled days. College is going well academically, athletically and socially. Her first semester grades were outstanding, she lettered in varsity field hockey, and her circle of friends (male and female) is a good one. That knowledge helps keep those insecurities in perspective.

And yet the thought still returns from time to time, "Why isn't she here with me?" I wrestle with the issue of my needs versus hers. Her father and I worked hard to give her roots to grow and wings to fly. The growing part was a piece of cake; the flying part, I'm still working on...

Marcia Greason is from Bridgton, Maine, and the mother of two children. She has served on the Board of Directors of the Hollingworth Center for Highly Gifted Children for 7 years.

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THE HIGHLY GIFTED

Educating Highly Gifted Children In an Age of Recession (Part II)

(In the last issue, we discussed the responsibilities of the school towards highly gifted children during difficult economic times. In this issue, the focus is on the responsibilities of parents.)

Mary Lou had a problem. Although her two highly gifted sons were doing well in school and earning good grades, they were often bored in the regular classroom. The school's program for the gifted, which met twice a week, was a high point in the day for both boys. Then the budget axe fell, and the program was eliminated. Although school personnel assured Mary Lou that the regular classroom teachers would be able to meet the needs of her children without gifted programming, Mary Lou was concerned. In addition to eliminating the gifted program, ability grouping had also fallen into disfavor, and both of her sons had been placed in classrooms with no other identified gifted children. When she approached the school principal about the possibility of acceleration in a subject area or a full grade skip for her oldest son, she was told that the school "didn't believe in" acceleration.

Mary Lou's story is not unique. Indeed, it has been repeated thousands of times in hundreds of communities in recent months, as the current economic recession continues and as popular "reforms" are adopted by school districts, without careful study of how these reforms affect all segments of the school community, including the gifted. Mary Lou, and other parents of highly gifted children, share some special responsibilities to their children and their communities as a result.

- **Support your child.** Highly gifted children have unique educational and emotional needs, as they struggle "to find enough hard and interesting work at school" (Hollingworth, 1942, p. 299) and to find intellectual peers. Home especially needs to be a place of safety and support for such a child, who may not find such support at school.
- **Educate yourself.** Recent research monographs published by the National Research Center on the Gifted and Talented (The University of Connecticut, 362 Fairfield Road, U-7, Storrs, CT 06269-2007) provide essential information to families of gifted and highly gifted children concerning ability grouping, cooperative learning, and acceleration. Such information, often brought to the attention of school officials by parents, has already made a significant difference in policy and practice in some schools.
- **Advocate.** Parents of highly gifted children usually discover early in their child's school career that advocacy for their child is going to be an ongoing process, whether they want it to be or not. What these parents may not realize is the power of formal, organized advocacy for gifted and highly gifted children on the local, state and federal levels and through private organizations. Such advocacy on the part of parents of highly gifted children in the last decade has already resulted in such changes as improving school policies regarding acceleration, state mandates requiring services to

gifted students, changes in state legislation allowing students still of compulsory school age to attend college instead, passage of the federal Jacob Javits Act of 1988 (which established the National Research Center and provided a competitive grants program in gifted education), and, in the private sector, the formation of the Hollingworth Center for Highly Gifted Children and at least one additional foundation. Parent advocacy can make a huge difference, but there is one caveat that is especially important for parents of highly gifted children to observe. Change takes time, and in the process, your own children are growing up in front of you. They are your first responsibility, and the first and most important people for whom you should advocate.

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Kathi Kearney, M.A.Ed., is Founder of the Hollingworth Center for Highly Gifted Children in South Casco, Maine, a doctoral candidate at Teachers College, Columbia University, and editor of *Highly Gifted Children*.

IN SEARCH OF SERENDIPITY



Creative

Ventures

And

Encounters

Jerry Flack

Tour Guide

Autobiography

Autobiography: The next best thing to living one's life over again.

Benjamin Franklin

On this journey, we will continue our look at the broad field of biography and its virtues by examining some creative approaches to autobiography. As gifted children and adolescents go out to conquer the world, perhaps a very good place for gifted youth to start examining their world is with a bit of self-study, a personalized introduction to autobiography. The following autobiographical activities work well both at home and at school. Indeed, the latter requires parent input even if completed primarily as a school activity.

Both younger and older students will love to make paper doll autobiographies. Paper doll autobiographies afford gifted students an opportunity to examine their own lives. Using bulletin board paper in long sheets (4-6 feet, length-wise), students work in pairs, first tracing each other's body outlines on the sheets of paper. Each student then cuts out his silhouette and personalizes it with creative drawings, pasted newspaper and magazine pictures or words and photos of things that represent favorite symbols, words, book titles, foods, music, heroes, personal goals, career aspirations, and the like. Each student ends up with a life-size poster of himself. His own artistic and creative autobiographical statement.

A variation on the paper doll autobiography is the creation of a "Me Mobile." Here the student creates 4-8 pictures or collages about herself and important events in her life. They may

be painted or drawn on paper plates or heavy construction paper of various sizes and shapes. Would-be sculptors can create three-dimensional figures by folding paper into the shapes (e.g., a Star of David; a child's pet cat) of favorite possessions, symbolic objects, and other artifacts of their lives. Tie varying lengths of string to each item and tie the other ends of the strings to a coat hanger. Presto, Maria has her very own "Me Mobile" to decorate her room.

Encourage gifted students to start creating a "Book of Me." A "Book of Me" should be filled with lots of illustrations and photographs, and should have many chapters. Chapter 1 might be about the subject's ancestors and ethnic or racial background. In Chapter 2, the subject can interview her parents to find out about her first toys, the first words she spoke, or even her first punishment or misadventure! Subsequent chapters can be about the first book read, "My first day at school," early birthday parties, a favorite vacation trip, an especially scary Halloween, and other celebrations. Of course, there should be chapters in each child's "Book of Me" about siblings, parents, grandparents, and friends. The young autobiographers can also write about their first night away from home, their first camp experience, and their first cub scout or 4-H meeting. No autobiography is complete without a chapter devoted to personal favorites. What are the subject's favorite colors, songs, holidays, school subjects, authors, books, days of the week, movies, heroes, seasons, quotations, and foods? A good autobiographer looks at her faults and weaknesses and may well have a chapter devoted to "habits I want to break." Finally, the consummate young autobiographer should have some idea of her life goals and aspirations. An excellent final chapter is a statement of the subject's philosophy of life and life ambitions.

(Continued on page 18)

from
parent

to
parent

One of the greatest challenges for any conscientious parent is giving children the freedom to make their own mistakes. Parents of gifted children may find this especially difficult. Keenly aware of our youngsters' talents, we may have trouble accepting their autonomy when they choose not to give their best efforts. At what point do we back off, even though we know that our children are headed for disappointment? Is giving them the scope to make poor decisions an abdication of our responsibility to support and guide or, paradoxically, the essence of responsibility?

All parents wrestle with this issue. What makes it harder for us is that we

may not confront it until later in our children's school careers, when their errors in judgment may cost them more dearly—and when our advice may run headlong into their growing drive for independence. Most children have ample opportunity throughout their school lives to discover the value of hard work. For high-achieving gifted youngsters, however, academic success may come without any appreciable effort. They may never have had to learn to delay the pleasure of the moment for the greater pleasure of achieving an important goal: it stands to reason that if you've never had to work, you've never had to learn to strike a balance between work and play! *This is why it is so important that gifted children be given*

appropriate challenges throughout their school years—not just to nurture their intellectual development but also to ensure they experience the demands and satisfactions of sustained effort. They need to learn that achievement is sometimes won only by hard work. Moreover, they need that lesson early, before adolescence makes it more difficult for us to guide them.

At some point we must recognize that our children's success is their own responsibility. We have to take advantage of opportunities when they are young and receptive to impart our values to them. We have to continue, as they get older, to remind them of the potential consequences of the choices that they make. We owe it to them to be clear and realistic about our expectations of them. But, ultimately, we cannot live our children's lives for them, no matter how much pain that might spare them. Sometimes they have to learn the hard way and—we hope—grow from their mistakes.

Mary Lynn Baum is past president of the Gifted Children's Association of British Columbia, Canada, and the parent of a highly gifted teenager.

Creative Ventures (Continued)

While gifted students are creating their own autobiographical projects they can also be sampling wonderful autobiographies. Younger gifted students have no doubt read many of Jean Fritz's biographies of Revolutionary War heroes, and the delightful escapades of Beverly Cleary's "Ramona." Both authors have written first-rate biographies for elementary/middle school students. Jean Fritz recounts her early life in China in *Homesick: My Own Story*. Beverly Cleary's *A Girl from Yamhill* is an equally well written memoir.

Gifted adolescents should not be allowed to graduate from high school without reading Russell Baker's *Growing Up* and Beryl Markham's

West with the Night. Baker won the Pulitzer Prize for his memoir about growing up gifted during the great Depression. Of Markham's extraordinary book, Noble prize-winning author Ernest Hemingway said, "She can write rings around all of us who consider ourselves writers." Both books are superb! As a final activity, teachers or parents can discuss relevance or "truth" in each of the following thoughts about the very subject of autobiography.

The lives of great men rarely remind us of anything sublime.
Lord Vansittart

An autobiography usually reveals nothing bad about its writer except his memory.
Franklin P. Jones

Only when one has lost all curiosity about the future has one reached the age to write an autobiography.
Evelyn Waugh

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NOTE: For a complete listing of biographies and autobiographies for gifted readers, please see the appendix of Silverman, L.K. (Ed). (1993). *Counseling the gifted and talented*. Denver: Love.

Jerry Flack, Ph.D., is a President's Teaching Scholar at the University of Colorado, and the author of *Inventing, Inventions, and Inventors*.



ANTENNA

Current Developments in Gifted Education

We get lots of letters! Of course, we love to read about what we're doing right at *Understanding Our Gifted*. We also welcome our readers' thoughtful comments about how we can improve the journal.

I was in my "What should I write about?" stage of preparation for this issue's column when we received a letter asking why we always emphasize the importance of curriculum and school-related issues? Why don't we write or talk more about the **basic** role of the family in the lives of our gifted children?

Fortunately, this issue's focus on family relationships is a timely response to the letter. And, because this column addresses current developments in gifted education, what could be more current—or **basic**—than interaction within families of gifted children?

Children have only one chance to pass through childhood. For bright children the passage is intense and often painful. Years of working with gifted children and their parents have convinced me that two elements within the family unit can provide an essential base of support: **belief in the child and home as a safe place.**

Home must be a place where you can be yourself and always feel loved and valued, even when you goof. We must trust our kids, value their opinions, include them in family decisions. The self-fulfilling prophecy presupposes that if we believe that children will succeed, they will.

If parents believe in their children, home is indeed a safe place. The home must truly be a sanctuary for children who do not feel safe at school or among peers, and trust must exist in the family.

Although I understand the concern of the above letter writer regarding our emphasis on school related topics, school needs to become an extension of home for all children. The same trust and safety should be present at school through including the gifted child in conferences, decisions about school placement, and the selection of appropriate learning experiences. The verbal child requires an opportunity to speak out in an accepting atmosphere to parents and school personnel who will listen and value the child's opinions.

Dorothy Knopper is a private consultant on gifted education in Colorado and the publisher of *Understanding Our Gifted*.

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Research Awards Available from Mensa

Deadline: December 31, 1992. The Mensa Education and Research Foundation offers Awards for Excellence of \$500 each to authors of research papers relating to intelligence or intellectual giftedness. Eligible research must have been published in a refereed journal or presented at a professional conference no earlier than January 1, 1988, and must not exceed 30 pages in length. For more information contact Joan E. Bauman, Ph.D., 4636 Candleglow Drive, St. Louis, MO 63129.

1993 Spring Conference of the Ohio Association for Gifted Children

April 30 - May 1, 1993. Ohio's conference on the theme, "Vision 2000: A New Generation," will be held at the SeaGate Centre in Toledo. A concurrent youth program is a special feature of the conference, with 4 strands for grades 1-12. For information, contact conference co-chair, Anne Nalls, Ed.D., 140 South Grove Street, Bowling Green, OH 43402. (419) 352-3576.

Advanced Development: A Journal on Adult Giftedness

The first journal on adult giftedness, *Advanced Development* focuses on inner development rather than achievement. Volume 4 on "The Self" is now available. The featured theorist is Roberto Assagioli and the moral exemplar is Peace Pilgrim. One-third larger than previous issues, this volume is packed with articles that will inspire you. (\$20 for individuals; \$30 for institutions.) See the order form on page 14 or contact ISAD, 777 Pearl St., Denver, CO 80203 (303) 837-8378.

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Permit No. 94

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

JANET DRILL
ERIC CLEARINGHOUSE
COUNCIL FOR EXCEPTIONAL CHILDREN
1920 ASSOCIATION DRIVE
RESTON, VA

22091-1589